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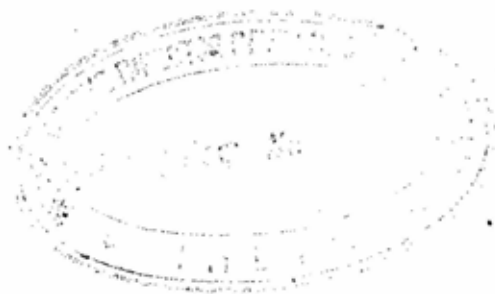
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THE HEADQUARTERS  
OF REALITY



*BY THE SAME AUTHOR*

THE CREED OF CHRIST  
THE CREED OF BUDDHA  
WHAT IS AND WHAT MIGHT BE  
THE SECRET OF HAPPINESS  
PHILOSOPHY WITHOUT METAPHYSICS  
SONNETS AND POEMS  
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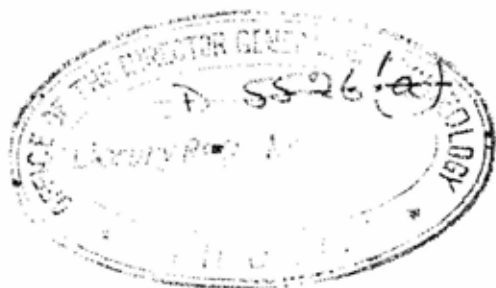
# THE HEADQUARTERS OF REALITY

A CHALLENGE TO WESTERN THOUGHT

BY

EDMOND HOLMES

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## INTRODUCTION

MY object in writing this book has been to find what I have called the Headquarters of Reality. Is the Ultimately Real, the Real of all reals, the Real as such, the Real in its own right—there are many names for it—to be found within or without, in the knower or in the known, in the perceptive and cognitive self, or in the objects of its perception and cognition? The dualism of within and without is forced upon me at the outset. But it is possible that there is a solution of the problem of Reality which provides for the ultimate supersession of that and all other dualisms; and my search for the Headquarters of Reality is, from one point of view, the search for such a solution of the greatest of all problems.

Under the lead of Greek thought in general and of Aristotle's philosophy in particular, the Western mind has always inclined towards the externalist conception of reality: a conception which tends to lower reality to the dead level of mere existence; which finds the criterion of



existence in the sense-perception of the normal or "standardized" man; which makes the analysis of sense-experience the pathway to ultimate truth; which therefore rules out the supernormal under all its aspects; and which leads at last either to the open dualism of Nature and the Supernatural (the latter being the externalist substitute for the supernormal) or to the veiled dualism of a materialistic philosophy.

In the *First Part* of the book I expound and criticize this solution of the problem. In the *Second Part* I turn for guidance to the Far East; and I find in the philosophy of the Upanishads what seems to me to make possible the true solution of the problem—namely, the transference of the quest of reality from without to within, and the consequent finding of the Real of all reals in the unexplored world—immaterial, formless, inconceivable, unknowable, unimaginable—into which each of us is admitted through the portal of his own self-consciousness; the world of Self or Spirit. The interpretation of that philosophy in terms of its bearing on conduct and character and the destiny of the soul was the task which Buddha set himself; and as such it is the theme of the last chapter of the *Second Part*.

In the *Third Part* I compare with one another

the three schemes of life that emerge from the rival solutions of the problem of Reality—the *Supernaturalism* and the *Normalism*<sup>1</sup> which we owe to the externalism of the West, and the *Spiritual Idealism* which we owe to the introspectiveness of Ancient India.

What are my qualifications for attempting this arduous and ambitious task? So far as first-hand knowledge of the philosophers in whom I am directly interested goes, they are very slight; indeed they are almost non-existent. But I have been fortunate in finding experts who can impart to me the knowledge which I cannot win for myself.

In particular, I have lately renewed, under the guidance of Dr. W. D. Ross's work on *Aristotle* and (in a lesser degree) of the late Professor Adamson's work on *The Development of Greek Philosophy*, a study of Aristotle's philosophy which had been suspended for nearly sixty years; and I am deeply grateful to Dr. Ross both for having written his book and for having allowed me to quote freely from it.

My study of the philosophy of the Upanishads has been made possible by various works, foremost among which is that of Professor R. E. Hume on *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads*;

<sup>1</sup> See footnote to p. 97.

and my warmest thanks are due to Professor Hume and to the Publishers of his book, the Oxford University Press, for permission to make copious extracts from his translations of the Sanskrit texts.

My thanks are also due to Dr. Jacks, the Editor of the *Hibbert Journal*, and to the Hibbert Trustees, for permission to incorporate in this book portions of two papers which I contributed to recent numbers of the *Journal*.

One or two passages from my earlier works have found their way into this book. My excuse for their presence in it is that they gave forcible expression to thoughts and convictions which are still mine, and that they seem to fit well into their new surroundings.

May, 1933

E. H.

THE HEADQUARTERS  
OF REALITY



*PART I*  
WITHOUT



## CHAPTER I

### THE ARISTOTELIAN LOGIC

I WANT to understand the Universe. I want to find an interpretation of it which will satisfy *me*—the whole me, intuition as well as intellect, heart as well as mind; an interpretation which, through my reaction to it, will help me to transform my being in the direction of my real self, and will therefore raise progressively my standard of inward satisfaction in regard to the issue of my quest. This means that there can be no finality in that quest; and it is well that I should face this fact at the outset.

I want to understand the Universe. I want, in other words,—for this is what my demand amounts to—to present to my consciousness the true orientation of my being, to justify to my reason the true faith and aspiration of my heart. This is the nearest approach that I can hope to make to understanding the Universe. I ask for no more than this; but I shall be content with no less.

What can the philosophies of the world do for me? What I may call the informal philosophy of the West has surrounded me from the day of my birth. That philosophy was the product, so to speak, of two confluent streams of thought—the supernaturalistic theism of the Jews and the naturalistic intellectualism of the Greeks.



Let us first consider what we owe to the Jews. Philosophy is the quest of reality. On its highest level it is the quest of the ultimate reality which men call God. The God of the Jews was at once spiritual and supernatural. He was entirely formless. The Second Commandment of the Decalogue expressly forbade His worshippers to invest Him with form of any kind or in any degree. And His formlessness was the very counterpart of His oneness. He reigned alone in the Pantheon of His people. All other claimants to divinity were impostors, "false gods". The opening words of the Decalogue are: "I am the Lord thy God: Thou shalt have none other gods but me."

In both these respects the God of the Jews differed profoundly and uncompromisingly from the Gods of the Gentiles. But, like the Gods of the Gentiles, He was an entirely outward Deity. The idea of seeking Him in what may well claim to be the headquarters of formless reality, in the self or inner life of man, never entered the heads of His worshippers. They thought of Him as outside self, outside the life of man, outside the world of form that lay around them, outside "Nature". The distinction between Nature and the Supernatural is one on which they did not consciously meditate, but which they implicitly affirmed. And it was this distinction which they transmitted, first and foremost, to Christendom. Whatever crudely materialistic conceptions of their "Heaven" the picture-thinking faculty of the human mind might from time to time have formed, the fact remains that in its essence—i.e. as the abode of God—it was separated from this world of ours, from "Earth", from "Nature", as is the Christian Heaven to-day,

by an abyss which, from the hither side, can neither be fathomed nor spanned.

This current of speculative thought was met by, and mingled itself with, the current of Greek intellectualism. There were two such confluences. The first, in the early days of the Christian Church, gave us the main features of the theology of Christendom. The second, at a much later date, gave final form, if not to the theology of Christendom, at least to its implicit philosophy. In the intervening centuries Greek influence on Christian faith and thought was partly mystical and therefore less characteristically Greek. For the speculative thought of the Greeks was essentially intellectual, not contemplative, still less mystical. As such it was both word-bound and sense-bound. It was a word-bound logic which, mingling itself with Judæo-Christian supernaturalism, gave us the theology of the early Christian Church, a theology which found its final expression in the Athanasian Creed. And it was a sense-bound cosmology, in alliance with a word-bound logic, which gave us—first through its direct influence on Christian theology, and then through the reaction which that theology, so influenced, provoked against itself—what I have called the informal philosophy of the West.

Both the word-bound logic and the sense-bound cosmology Christendom owed to Aristotle. And Aristotle was a typical Greek. What was best in the Greek mind found its fullest expression in him:—its vivid interest in the actualities of existence; its intellectual vigour and self-confidence; its insatiable curiosity; its restless activity; its mental and moral balance. But the Greek mind had the defects of its qualities; and these too were

Aristotle's:—its undue reliance on intellect pure and simple, and therefore on words as the instrument of intellectual thought; its assumption that the master problems of existence can be solved, so far as their experiential basis is concerned, within the limits of the normal man's normality; its instinctively materialistic, and therefore dualistic, outlook on the world. As a speculative thinker, Aristotle was as great as it is possible for a man to be who is neither a poet nor a mystic, and who ignores the occult and the supernatural. His interest in things was encyclopaedic; and this, and his intellectual earnestness and sincerity and the air of authority with which he wrote, impressed his readers, in an ignorant and uncritical age, so deeply that it gave him an unique position among thinkers, and led to his acceptance by Christendom, when St. Thomas Aquinas had "baptized him into the Church" as "the Thinker" *par excellence*, as "the master of those who know".

This quasi-apotheosis of Aristotle was a calamity, the evil effects of which are with us still. That it arrested for centuries the advance of physical science, through its subordination of observational and experimental study to "authority", is a point on which I need not enlarge. But it did far more than this. It exercised a cramping influence on Western thought, both professional and popular, from which it has not yet shaken itself free. It gave a more or less materialistic bias to the outlook of the Western mind on the world around it, to its vision of reality, to its estimation of values, to its general conception of the meaning of life and of the ideal ends of human action. One may revere Aristotle as an intellectual giant—great as a pioneer

in certain branches of science, great as a critic, great as a moralist, great as an adventurer into unexplored regions of experience—and yet hold that, as the spokesman and typical representative of Greek culture, he was, in some respects at least, the evil genius of Western thought.

Let us go back to the Greek mind. Both its qualities and its limitations it owed in no small measure to the subtle influence of its geographical environment. There are two passages in a recently published work on Ancient Greece by a French historian<sup>1</sup> which throw light on certain characteristics of the Greek mind that are admirable or the reverse, according to the point of view from which one looks at them. The first passage deals with the clearness of the Greek atmosphere:

"In the transparent luminous atmosphere even the most distant objects stand out with perfect sharpness; the outline is as hard as the lines of architecture. The eye, and through the eye the mind, grow accustomed to the utmost precision. There is nothing misty or smudged or vague, as in the lands of the North. The poetry of haze and mystery, wraiths fading into the clouds, German romance and Scandinavian symbolism, all that is unknown to the Hellenes. There is no more fog in Greek thought than in Greek landscape."

The second passage deals with the most prominent features of Greek landscape—the mountains and the sea:

"In [Greece] there is no majesty of inaccessible peaks, no immensity of water. The impression of

<sup>1</sup> *Formation of Greek People*, by A. Jarde.

boundless solitude is never given by the Greek seas, which are contained within reasonable limits and, as it were, humanized. The seas, like the mountains, awake no idea of the infinite in the Greek; the very notion is utterly foreign to Greek thought. Meditation before the infinitely great and the infinitely small . . . would have been incomprehensible to a Greek philosopher. For him the infinite is the indefinite, and the indefinite is the monstrous. Plato may believe in the survival of the soul, but refuses to attribute eternity to it, for he sees perfection only in a determined space and a final time. The poetry of the infinite, like the poetry of mystery, finds no echo in the Greek soul."

Clarity, precision, moderation,—these are excellent qualities as far as they go; but when the mind of man is trying to understand the universe, they do not go far enough. When they are in the ascendant, the spirit of high adventure is obviously wanting. Indeed it is their very function to say No to that spirit, to confine it within a fixed horizon, to clip its wings. For the Greek the boundary line of vision, whether physical or mental, was as a rule the boundary line of existence. What could not be clearly seen was unreal. What did not admit of exact statement was untrue. To go beyond the mean was to court danger, disaster and final failure. It was not for the Greek to climb the snow-clad mountain or to sail the open sea.

"All deep and earnest thinking", says an imaginative writer, "is but the intrepid effort of the soul to keep the open independence of her sea, while the wildest winds of heaven and earth conspire to cast her on the treacherous, slavish shore. But as in landlessness alone resides the highest truth, shoreless, indefinite as God—so better is it to perish in that howling infini-

tude, than be ingloriously dashed upon that lee even if that were safety."<sup>1</sup>

The Greek would not have assented to this. He preferred the known dangers of the familiar shore to the unknown dangers of the uncharted deep. The supreme adventures of the spirit are not for those who idealize the mean.

And Aristotle was, as I have said, a typical Greek. He concentrated in himself and raised to a high power the best qualities of the Greek intellect, and he emphasized and lent quasi-authoritative sanction to its limitations. How did he interpret the universe? When Christendom, in the Twelfth and Thirteenth centuries A.D., renewed an acquaintance with him which had been largely, though not wholly, suspended, he made, as I have pointed out, two notable contributions to Western thought—a word-bound logic (with which indeed it was already to some extent familiar) and a sense-bound cosmology. These gifts were thankfully and uncritically accepted; but I think we can now see that the familiar line

"Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes"<sup>2</sup>

had a wider scope than its author intended and was in a sense prophetic. For the Western mind is still in the grip of both the word-bound logic and the sense-bound cosmology; and because to-day these are not in keeping with the recent advances in its knowledge of Nature and in the range of its thought, and because they no longer satisfy its expanding consciousness, the

<sup>1</sup> *Moby Dick*, by Hermann Melville.

<sup>2</sup> "I fear the Greeks, even when they are bringing gifts."

whole world is being convulsed by its efforts to free itself from their fetters.

That the Greek mind would, sooner or later, give the world a word-bound logic was inevitable. For the mind which values clarity, precision and moderation as the highest of mental qualities, cannot allow itself to speculate largely without imposing on itself at the outset some measure of control; as otherwise it might find itself adrift on the open sea, carried by winds of emotion and currents of intuition, which come it knows not whence and go it knows not whither—carried along courses of which it cannot “foresee the dangers or the end”.

But is it wise of the speculative thinker to fetter his freedom by formulating beforehand the laws which are to regulate his thinking and the canons of correctness to which his reasoning is to conform? Is he not dooming himself to think in a circle, to arrive at last at conclusions which he has proved to his own satisfaction, but which were really implicit in the very process of his proof? He who decides at the outset how he is going to think has already gone far towards determining the issue of his thinking. For the laws of thought which he binds himself to obey, and indeed the whole machinery of his thinking, must needs reflect in their larger features his general outlook on the world. If laws of thought are not also laws of things, if they are not statements of master tendencies of Nature, whence do they derive their authority?

This is one point of view. There is another. It may be contended that there are laws which do in point of fact regulate the processes of human thought when the mind is functioning properly; that those laws can be

discovered by introspection and that, when discovered, they can be and should be consciously obeyed. But even if one grants this assumption, one is not justified in concluding that obedience to those laws will enable the thinker to solve the master problems of existence; except indeed on the further assumption that the laws in question are intrinsically valid,—in other words, that the human intellect is absolutely self-sufficient, that it contains in itself the test and measure of truth and the touchstone of reality.

And, as it happened, it was with those two assumptions as his mental equipment that Aristotle entered the field of speculative thought. Yet, even with that mental equipment, he could not avoid the vicious circle in which everyone who tries to think logically about great matters is predestined to involve himself. For though "logic is in Aristotle's view a study preliminary to science and Philosophy",<sup>1</sup> he had to go to "Philosophy" for the first principles of his logic. It is in his *Metaphysics* that he formulates the two master Laws of Thought.

The word "logic" was unknown to Aristotle, whose own name for the study of reasoning was "analytics". But we owe to him the name "metaphysics". What did he mean by it? "Is a single supreme science of metaphysics possible—a synoptic science which shall study the nature not of this or that reality but of the

<sup>1</sup> *Aristotle*, Dr. W. D. Ross. In this and the next chapter there are many quotations, the sources of which are not acknowledged in footnotes. These all come from *Aristotle*, by Dr. W. D. Ross, whom I have thanked in the Introduction for permission, generously given, to quote freely from his invaluable work.



real as such and deduce the detailed nature of the universe from some central principle?" Dr. Ross tells us that Aristotle asked himself this question and answered it in the affirmative. In so answering it he solved at the outset the first and last of metaphysical problems, or at least provided for its solution. For he brought the "real as such", the universe in its inwardness and totality, within the compass of man's conscious thought, having previously (as we shall see) found a place for man, the conscious thinker, as an integral part of the world around him, the world of sense-experience, the world of matter and form. This was his initial interpretation of the universe; and in effect he never advanced beyond it.

Let us now see how he proposed to regulate man's conscious thought.

His logic centres in two fundamental laws of thought—the Law of Contradiction and the Law of Excluded Middle. When I studied Scholastic logic at Oxford there was a third law which was placed first—the Law of Identity. But it matters little whether we think of the laws as two, or three; for in the last resort they are only one. But let us first think of them as three.

According to a popular handbook of Logic<sup>1</sup> the three laws are as follows:

- (1) The Law of Identity. Whatever is, is.
- (2) The Law of Contradiction. Nothing can both be and not be.
- (3) The Law of Excluded Middle. Everything must either be or not be.

<sup>1</sup> *Logic*, by Jevons.

Are not these three laws to all intents and purposes one? If what is, is; if its essential being is clearly definable; if its self-identity is indisputable; then it is quite certain that it cannot also not be. And if it cannot both be and not be, then it is quite certain that it must either be or not be. Let us, then, concentrate our attention on the law which Aristotle placed first, the Law of Contradiction. This safeguards the Law of Identity, by providing against the self-identity of the thing being challenged; and it is convertible at will into the Law of Excluded Middle.

For example: Is such and such a book on such and such a shelf? If it is, it is. It cannot both be and not be. And it must either be or not be. Here the Law of Contradiction safeguards the Law of Identity by at once suggesting and denying the possibility of the book both being and not being on the shelf. And it is obviously convertible into the Law of Excluded Middle. And here the authority of the Tri-une Law is indisputable. But is anything to be gained by invoking it? No one in his senses would contemplate the possibility of the book both being on the shelf and not on it. But books and shelves are individual concrete things; and the placing of a book on a shelf is an individual concrete event. If concrete things and concrete events were all that we had to think about, the Law of Contradiction would rule our minds without our being aware of its existence, and there would be no need for it to be formulated.

We have many other things to think about. And we can see from this example that if the Law of Contradiction is to do effective work we must be quite clear in our minds as to what we are talking about, and

quite clear as to what we are saying about it. But are there not many things in the world whose essential being is indefinable and whose qualities are at best imperfectly known? And if there are such things, how will the Law of Contradiction help us to understand them? And are there not many things which are in process of growth or decay, and of which it is therefore impossible to say when self-identity is attained or lost? And if there are such things, how will the Law of Contradiction help us when we are thinking about them? Is not the very idea of Becoming at war with the logic which bids us choose between *Yes* and *No*? And are there not many words which mean different things for different minds and in different contexts? And if there are such words how will the Law of Contradiction help us when we are disputing about them? The Law is effective just when there is no work for it to do. It offers us guidance just when our way is plainest before us. And it fails us just when our perplexity is deepest and we need direction most.

Why, then, did Aristotle make it the pivot of his logic? If we are to understand his word-bound logic we must study his sense-bound cosmology. This we shall presently do. Meanwhile we must anticipate the results of our study so far as to answer, in brief and in general terms, the question: How did Aristotle conceive of the world which he looked out upon? He assumed that "sense-experience proper, free from any admixture of association or interpretation, is infallible". In other words, the world for him was full of individual concrete things, which were all as real as they seemed to be. This "naïvely realistic" conception of the world

found its natural counterpart in a word-bound logic. For when individual concrete things are thought of as real in themselves, they will acquire, in the thinker's mind, a fixity and self-identity which they will pass on to the names by which they are known, and which it will be the function of logic to guard. It is through the Law of Contradiction that the Aristotelian logic fulfils this function. The meaning of the name, as the logician thinks of it, is as sure and stable, as real in itself (one might almost say) as is the "substance" of the thing; and its self-identity must not be tampered with.<sup>1</sup>

When the relation between things and names is so conceived of, there is a constant tendency for things to find their equivalents, for the thinking mind, in names, and for names to acquire the status of symbols.<sup>2</sup> When names have been reduced to the level of symbols the logician can do what he pleases with them. The three-fold drawback to his use of *live* words as counters in his game—that they have different shades of meaning for different minds, that they acquire different shades of meaning from different contexts, and that they are

<sup>1</sup> "The possibility of thinking at all, Aristotle seems to say, depends on the admission that there is a certain fixity of significance in terms or notions, and this in the long run is equivalent to the fixity of the nature of that which is. . . . It is impossible in any way to extract from the notion of thinking as a merely subjective activity the principle of contradiction. . . . It is primarily with respect to . . . concrete existents, each with a definite nature, that the principle has its application." *The Development of Greek Philosophy*, by Professor R. Adamson.

<sup>2</sup> Here, and elsewhere in this book, I use the word "symbol" in the sense which it bears in exact science; in mathematics, for example, or in chemistry.

acquiring fresh shades of meaning from age to age—has disappeared. But if the words are truly alive the logician will play with them at his peril; for such words have a latent vitality, an inherent buoyancy, a potential energy, in the strength of which they resist the attempts that are made to treat them as symbols, and show their resentment by stultifying the logician's arguments and falsifying his conclusions.

Hence the danger of introducing logical laws and forms into the region of speculative thought; for there the words that matter most—*God, man, soul, self, spirit, thought, feeling, will, reality, nature, Universe*, and the like—are of all words the most truly alive, the most variable, in respect of meaning, from mind to mind, from context to context, from age to age, and the most fully charged with varying associations, due to centuries of usage, and also with potentialities of further developments of meaning. Yet it is in the region of speculative thought, as we shall presently see, that the temptation to use words as symbols, and therefore as counters in the logician's game, is strongest.

Let us go back to the Law of Contradiction. That the law works best when words are treated as symbols is one of the dangers that attend its use. But there are others. That it ignores gradation and relativity and so makes for dualism in thought is one of these. That, though it forbids us to confound contradiction with opposition—not *A* with the *opposite of A*—it tempts us through its very barrenness and futility to make that fatal confusion, and so plunge headlong into dualism—is another and perhaps the most serious of all.

Even Dr. Ross (who has been my mentor in my

belated study of Aristotle) seems to me to have succumbed to that temptation in one passage in his book. After telling us, (as we have already seen) that for Aristotle "sense-perception proper . . . is infallible", he goes on to say

"It is the awareness of something which is distinct from the awareness and is a concomitant of the object. Each such *sensum* has a character of its own distinct from that of its opposite. 'Sweet', for example, stands for a certain definite kind of *sensum*. Any *sensum*, whenever experienced, must have this character if it is to be designated as 'sweet' and cannot be designated as bitter. Sense does not contradict itself about the *sensum*. Thus, as regards sense, there is no reason to doubt the law of contradiction."

This passage, as it seems to me, does less than justice to the law which it defends. Whatever the Law of Contradiction may have meant for Aristotle, it is certain that in logical strictness it has nothing to say to *opposites*. Its business is with *contradictories*. The difference between the two is all important. If I were to say that a certain avenue was a hundred yards long, a lover of accuracy who had measured it might *contradict* my statement and say that the length was *not* a hundred yards, but ninety-nine. But ninety-nine is not the *opposite* of a hundred. The Law of Contradiction authorizes us to say that the same food cannot, at the same time and (one may surely add) relatively to the same palate, be both sweet and not-sweet. It does not authorize us to say that it cannot be both sweet and bitter. Apart from the fact that different palates have different standards of sweetness, our

various articles of food are objectively sweet or bitter—in strictness I ought to say sweet *and* bitter—in varying degrees.<sup>1</sup> For sweetness and bitterness are not mutually exclusive qualities, but the opposite directions—ideally, the opposite poles—of a process in which there is continuous gradation; so that the two qualities interpenetrate in varying degrees, there being few foods which are entirely sweet and few which are entirely bitter. In ordinary conversation one can of course use either word without qualification and without the risk of being misunderstood. But the Law of Contradiction does not authorize that use of them. Its other self, the Law of Excluded Middle, requires us to say that every food is either sweet or not sweet,—a proposition which is meaningless except on the assumption that the word “sweet” has been defined with absolute—i.e. quantitative—precision. It does not require us to say that every food is either sweet or bitter. If it did, it would require us to talk nonsense; for it would be as absurd to divide foods into sweet and bitter as to divide mountains into high and low or temperatures into hot and cold.

But the real trouble about the statement “every food is either sweet or not sweet” is not that it presupposes an impossibly accurate and absolutely valid definition of sweetness, but that we cannot be bothered using the term “not sweet” when the word “bitter”, as a conventionally adequate substitute for it, is at our service and always ready for use. Hence it is that

<sup>1</sup> I am assuming for the moment, and for argument's sake, that the antithesis of sweet and bitter covers all foods. In point of fact there are many foods which are neither sweet nor bitter.

we slide imperceptibly into the confusion between opposites and contradictories, and so into dualism, which may be defined as the application of the Law of Contradiction to correlated opposites, or, more simply, as the demand for Yes *or* No when the right answer is Yes *and* No. In ordinary conversation we can, as I have pointed out, afford to be dualistic—as in fact (under pressure of the dualistic trend of language) we usually are—without the risk of being misunderstood and without serious confusion of thought. But when we enter a region such as that of speculative thought, where correlated terms stand for opposite tendencies which have a wide range in both directions, and in respect of which the quantitative measurement<sup>1</sup> of gradation is impossible and the qualitative measurement varies from mind to mind, then the confusion between contradiction and opposition is fraught with sinister consequences, leading as it does to dualism in thought, in belief, in feeling and in action.<sup>1</sup>

And, as it happens, it is in that region that words are at once furthest removed from the status of symbols and in most imminent danger of being treated as symbols. For there the words, being vividly alive, mean different things for different minds, with the result that each mind, in proportion to its interest in

<sup>1</sup> Is not the philosophy of Christian Science—nominally monistic, in reality hopelessly dualistic—the outcome of the current confusion between contradiction and correlated opposition, a confusion which leads on in this case to confusion between unreality and non-existence? The pain of a toothache, being transient, may be thought of as relatively unreal. To say that it is non-existent, that the sufferer does not feel it, is to talk sheer nonsense.



the given subject, is tempted to postulate the intrinsic validity of its own interpretation of the words that it uses, the temptation being the greater because verification by a direct appeal to tangible experience is known to be impossible.

So much for the Law of Contradiction. Under its control thinking, and especially high thinking, becomes a game in which rival disputants take the place of fellow-workers in the great quest; in which the defeat of a rival takes the place, as the object of each player's ambition, of the conquest of truth; in which the counters are words—words which have taken the place of things, and in doing so have sunk to the level of quasi-mathematical symbols; in which the aim of the players is not to approach their goal, as in science, through the patient investigation of evidence and the measurement—qualitative, if not quantitative—of values, but to bring great questions, including the greatest of all, to the issue of an unqualified Yes or an unqualified No; and in which correctness of logical procedure takes the place of verification by experience as the final proof of truth.

What is the correct procedure while this game is being played? When the appeal to experience is impossible or, if possible, is ruled out, how is the thinker to work his way to his conclusions? Intuitional reasoning has a secret logic of its own, of which formal logic knows nothing. If the thinker will not trust to this—and presumably he will not—what can he do but satisfy himself that his premises, his initial assumptions, are sound and then reason deductively from these, taking care that in doing so he obeys the rules of the logical game?

This leads me to consider Aristotle's second contribution to the science and art of reasoning—the *sylogism*. "The doctrine of the syllogism", says Dr. Ross, "may be said to be due entirely to Aristotle." And the syllogism, as defined by its inventor, is "an argument in which, certain things having been assumed, something other than these follows of necessity from their truth without needing any term from outside". In other words, the purpose of syllogistic reasoning is to enable the reasoner to arrive at certain conclusions and accept these as indisputably true, without having verified them by an appeal to experience. In a syllogism there are three *propositions*—the *major premise* (all men are animals), the *minor premise* (John is a man), the *conclusion* (John is an animal). A proposition is a form of words in which something is asserted about something. That about which the assertion is made is called the *subject*. That which is asserted about the subject is called the *predicate*.

Syllogistic reasoning is *verbal* from first to last. Its terms are all words;<sup>1</sup> and the logician uses these with the assurance with which the mathematician uses the alphabetical symbols of algebra or the diagrammatic symbols of geometry. Is he justified in doing so? I have already protested against the degradation—inevitable, under the Law of Contradiction, on the higher levels of thought—of living words to the status of symbols. But let us hear what Dr. Schiller, an acute critic of formal logic, who has gone into the question from the point of view of the proposition rather than of the individual word, has to say on this point. He

<sup>1</sup> Unless of course they happen to be symbols, properly so called.

outside of us, and which mean we do not know how much, but so much certainly as may run away with us, in proportion as we enter into them, beyond the range of scientific treatment. The concrete matter of propositions is a constant source of trouble to syllogistic reasoning as marring the simplicity and perfection of its process. Words which denote things have innumerable implications; but in inferential exercises it is the very triumph of that clearness and hardness of head, which is the characteristic talent for the art, to have stripped them of all these connatural senses, to have drained them of that depth and breadth of association which constitute their poetry, their rhetoric and their historical life, to have starved each term down till it has become the ghost of itself, and everywhere the same ghost, *omnibus umbra locis*, so that it may stand for just one unreal aspect of the concrete thing to which it properly belongs, for a relation, a generalization, or other abstraction, for a notion neatly turned out of the laboratory of the mind, and sufficiently tame and subdued because existing only for a definition."

And Newman insists as strongly as does Dr. Schiller on the importance of the part that personality plays in reasoning and on the responsibility of the thinker for the conduct of his thought. The following passages in the *Grammar of Assent* are conclusive on this point:

"It is the mind that reasons, and that controls its own reasoning, not any technical apparatus of words and proposition." "Certitude is not a passive impression made upon the mind from without by argumentative compulsion, but . . . it is an active recognition of propositions as true, such as it is the duty of each individual to exercise for himself at the bidding of reason, and, when reason forbids, to withhold. And

reason never bids us be certain except on an absolute proof, and such a proof can never be furnished to us by the logic of words, for as certitude is of the mind so is the act of inference. Everyone who reasons is his own centre, and no expedient for attaining a common measure of truth can reverse this truth—but then the question follows, is there any *criterion* of an act of inference such as may be our warrant that certitude is rightly elicited in favour of the proposition inferred? . . . the sole and final judgment on the validity of an inference in concrete matters is committed to a faculty which I have called the Illative Sense."

The doctrine of the Illative Sense and the philosophy that underlies it will be considered in a later chapter. The doctrine raises many questions, one of which Newman himself has answered: If the Illative Sense can play so large a part in human reasoning, what function or functions are we to assign to Formal Logic?

"If a logician", says Newman, "can enable his pupils to show well in a *viva voce* disputation, or in a popular harangue, or in a written dissertation, he has achieved the main purpose of his profession."

"To show well!" To play the Sophist. To make the worse reason appear the better. To silence an opponent without convincing him. To talk claptrap to an audience. Are these the fairest fruits of the logician's "clearness and hardness of head"? A more scathing exposition of the pretentiousness and uselessness of Formal Logic could not well have been formulated than that which is implicit in Newman's grave enumeration of its merits.

Such, in its main features, was the analysis of the

art of reasoning which Aristotle gave to the world. He left behind him no one work on Logic, but a group of logical treatises known, at least from the Sixth Century A.D., as the *Organon* or instrument of thought. About 500 A.D. the earlier and more elementary parts of the *Organon* were translated into Latin by Boethius and others; and from then till about 1200 A.D., it was chiefly through those translations that the leaven of Aristotle's influence was at work<sup>1</sup> in the West, the rest of his writings being unknown. When the rest of his writings became known, the translations of the *Organon* had prepared the way for the reception by the West (as authoritative) of his cosmology, his metaphysical interpretation of the universe. It was presumed, I imagine, that one who had taught people how to reason must himself have reasoned correctly.

<sup>1</sup> "*Directly* at work," I ought perhaps to say. Indirectly Aristotle's influence was transmitted through sundry channels, of which the Stoical philosophy was by far the most important.

## CHAPTER II

### THE ARISTOTELIAN COSMOLOGY

**H**AD Aristotle reasoned correctly? We have seen that he started on his speculative adventure by assuming that "a single supreme science of metaphysics is possible, a synoptic science which shall study the nature not of this or that reality, but of the real as such, and deduce the detailed nature of the universe from some central principle". To this assumption, which brings apprehension of ultimate reality within the compass of the human intellect, he added a *second*, viz. that "the true nature of being is exhibited in that which is both substantial and unchangeable". That was how he thought of the "real as such". But what did he mean by "substantial"? "A substance is that which is not asserted of a subject, but of which everything else is asserted." "A qualityless substance is as impossible as a quality which does not presuppose a substance." Here substance is thought of as "the individual concrete thing". The word has another meaning for Aristotle, which will presently be considered (p. 38) but with which we need not now concern ourselves. Where is unchangeable substance to be found? To his second assumption Aristotle added a *third*: that "sense-perception proper, freed from any admixture of association or interpretation, is infallible". The world which sense-perception reveals

to us is a real world—in a sense, *the* real world; and it is full of individual concrete things, which are all “substances” and all as real as they seem to be. And this “naïvely realistic assumption” applies to man as well as to the rest of the outward and visible world. This is the *fourth* of Aristotle’s preliminary assumptions: “Soul and body are not two substances, but inseparable elements in a single substance.” The soul is not thought of “as a pure spiritual being to which its body is as much a part of the outside world as other physical things”. “A notion like that of Descartes, that the existence of the soul is the first certainty and the existence of matter a later inference would have struck Aristotle as absurd. The whole self, soul and body alike, is something given and not questioned.”

The outward and visible world is the real world, and man himself, who looks out upon it and contemplates it and tries to understand it, belongs to it. Where, then, in this real world, is the true nature of being, “the real as such”, to be found? We are to seek it outside ourselves. We are not to seek it in the self, the inner life of man. This much is clear. But what is there in the outside world which is both substantial and unchangeable? The outside world is the world of *matter* and *form*. These words explain themselves. They are antithetical and therefore correlative terms. Each of them has its meaning in and through its opposition to, or contrast with, the other, and neither can survive the disappearance of the other. Strictly speaking, there is no matter without form, and no form without matter. And the world of matter and form has existed as such from all eternity. *It has neither been created nor evolved.* On both these

points, and especially the latter, we must make our minds quite clear. The world of matter and form is a world of movement, of change, of generation. And this has never begun.

"By the eternity of the world of generation", says Professor Adamson, "Aristotle meant, not merely that the generated, the changeable, is an ultimate and finally inexplicable component of the world of existence, but also, first, that the typical forms, which define as far as is possible the world of generation are eternal; and secondly, that the actual process whereby development or change within the world of generation comes about is always an efficient causation on the part of a definite individual . . . for example, nothing could be farther from Aristotle's view of the world of generation than any thought of the gradual evolution of the human species from a lower animal type; the race of man is as eternal as the world of generation. . . . Aristotle's view of development is that it naturally proceeds from the highest to the lowest. He has no conception corresponding to the modern view of Evolution."<sup>1</sup>

Thus the world of matter and form, though full of change, is, and has always been, an unchanging whole. Where, then, in that world is the "real as such" to be found? It cannot, I think, in strictness be said that Aristotle finds the "real as such" in the world of matter and form. He does indeed study that world in his quest of the "real as such"; but when he finds this it proves (as we shall see) to be *immaterial*, and therefore outside the world of matter and form. The

<sup>1</sup> *The Development of Greek Philosophy*, by Professor Adamson.



truth is, as it seems to me, that Aristotle does but find in the world around him, when his quest is over, what he has introduced into it in the course of his quest, or perhaps before his quest began. For he finds the "real as such" in what I may call *three metaphysical extras*, which he has added to the world of matter and form, but which do not properly belong to it.

Let us see what these are. The world around us is full of individual concrete things. These are all "substances". But they are all subject to change. Movement is of the essence of Nature; and movement implies change. Material or "sensible" things are therefore all subject to change. Is there any reality which is both substantial and unchangeable? "Universals" such as "being" and "unity" are unchangeable, but they are not substances. "They exist as characteristics of individual concrete things." The objects of mathematical reasoning are not substances. "They are free from change but exist only as distinguishable aspects of concrete realities." But there are substances which are non-sensible and therefore unchangeable, and also substantially real. These are: (1) *God, the unmoved mover of the world.* (2) *The "intelligences" which move the planetary spheres.* (3) *The active element in human reason.* These are substantial and unchangeable and as such are supremely real. And they are all immaterial. "Form exists separate and unchangeable in each of them." And it is pure form, form which is wholly divorced from matter.

Such is the vision of supreme reality in which Aristotle's mind, under the guidance of its own metaphysical assumptions, found rest. Let us consider each of the three "Reals" in turn. And let us begin

with the highest, with the Prime Mover, with God. It is by a strangely fantastic chain of reasoning that Aristotle worked his way to his conception of God. The successive links in that chain have been set before us by Dr. Ross. "In Book XI of the *Metaphysics*" he tells us

"we find Aristotle arguing for the existence of a God so remote from popular religious ideas that no element of accommodation to the intelligence or the prejudices of his audience is to be suspected; and arguing from principles that are deep seated in his metaphysics. The argument may be set out as follows: Substances are the first of existing things. Therefore, if all substances are perishable all things are perishable. But there are two things which are imperishable, change and time. These cannot have come into being and cannot cease to be, since that would mean that there was a time before time was, or that there will be time after time has ceased. And change must be equally continuous with time, since time is, if not identical with change, at least a concomitant of it. Now the only continuous change is change of place, and the only continuous change of place is circular motion. Therefore there must be an eternal circular motion.

"To produce eternal motion there must be eternal substance. . . . This eternal substance must be capable of causing motion. . . . It must not only have this power but exercise it. Its essence must be not power but activity, for otherwise it would be possible for it not to exercise this power, and change would not be eternal, i.e. *necessarily* everlasting. It must be immaterial since it must be eternal.

"This result is confirmed by experience, which shows that there is something that moves with an unceasing circular motion, viz. the starry heavens. There must

be something that moves it. Now that which moves and is moved is an intermediate with which we cannot rest content: there must be something which moves without being moved. And the unmoved mover must be the eternal, substantial, purely actual being whose existence has already been proved.

"Now how can anything cause motion without being moved? The physical causation of movement implies the mutual contact of mover and moved, and therefore a reaction of the moved on the mover. The unmoved mover must therefore cause motion in a non-physical way by being an object of desire. . . .

"We may now turn to Aristotle's account of the prime mover itself. Physical activity being excluded by its immaterial nature, he ascribes to it only mental activity, and only that kind of mental activity which owes nothing to the body, viz. knowledge; and only that kind of knowledge which involves no process, no transition from premiss to conclusion, but is direct and intuitive. . . . Now knowledge, when not dependent, as in man, on sense and imagination, must be of that which is best; and that which is best is 'the prime mover itself' is God (as we may now call it). The object of God's knowledge is therefore God Himself."

It has been contended by some of Aristotle's commentators that, since "all things other than God owe their being entirely to God, God's self-knowledge must be at the same time a knowledge of all other things". "This", says Dr. Ross, "is a possible and a fruitful line of thought, but it is not that which Aristotle adopts. For him that God should know Himself and that He should know other things are alternatives, and in affirming the first alternative he implicitly denies the second. Indeed he denies explicitly much that the second would involve; he denies to God all knowledge of evil and all transition from one object of

thought to another. The result of the wish to exclude from the divine life any relation to evil and any 'shades of turning' is the impossible and barren ideal of a knowledge with no object but itself."

"God, then, as conceived by Aristotle, has a knowledge which is not knowledge of the universe, and an influence on the universe which does not flow from His knowledge." He has not created the world. "For Aristotle matter is ungenerated, eternal; he expressly argues against a creation of the world. . . . The intelligences appear to be independently existing uncreated beings . . . and [there are] passages in which the eternal pre-existence of reason is clearly maintained."

Nor is God to be identified with Providence. There are indeed passages in which he seems to ascribe

"to God a general ordering of the universe. . . . But it is remarkable how little trace there is of this way of thinking, if we discount passages where Aristotle is probably accommodating himself to common opinions; he never uses the word 'providence' of God, as Socrates and Plato had done; he has no serious belief in divine rewards and punishments; he has no interest as Plato has in justifying the ways of God to man".

And though his teleology is an essential feature of his cosmology, it is not theistic. "In the works which express his maturer views adaptation is usually ascribed to the unconscious teleology of nature rather than to the working out of a divine plan."

Are we to take this "theology" seriously? It has the merit of originality. Has it any other merit? It is certainly open to criticism on many counts. For one thing, it is not easy to see how the physical world

can be moved by such an obviously non-physical motive force as *desire*. It looks as if this were a desperate expedient on Aristotle's part for getting things going, for setting in motion (as it were) the wheels of his own metaphysical machinery. But if God is indeed the object of desire from all parts of the world—desire which is, I presume, compounded of aspiration and love—one might surely expect Him to requite that desire with some measure of interest and good-will. But this is not so. God, as Aristotle thinks of Him, is entirely absorbed in self-contemplation. In other words, He is the very apotheosis of egoism. The heart which turns towards God with love and desire instinctively rejects the theology which presents Him, not as the supreme lover but as the supreme egoist,

"As alien, passionless, alone,  
Blind to all being but his own."

One of the penalties that man has to pay for looking for God outside himself is that the whole range of his normal experience interposes itself between him and God, and therefore drives God (so to speak) into an exile, from which there is no return.

*"Jamais Dieu,"* says Renan, *"n'a été aussi déterminé, aussi isolé du monde que celui d'Aristote. Si l'on applique le nom de panthéisme aux doctrines qui craignent de limiter Dieu, aucune doctrine n'a été plus que la sienne opposée au panthéisme. Cette théodicée pouvait convenir à une école naturaliste comme l'école peripatéticienne; pour simplifier son objet et écarter tout ce qui rassemble à une hypothèse, le naturaliste voudrait faire à Dieu, une fois pour toutes, sa part bien arrêtée, et le reléguer le plus loin possible du champ de l'expérience."*

The part of "prime mover" which Aristotle assigned to God placed Him, in metaphysical theory, at the heart of the world; but the conception of Him as eternally absorbed in self-contemplation removed Him, in effect, beyond the uttermost horizon of existence.

The Aristotelian theology cannot satisfy the heart.

Nor can it satisfy the head. Its premises are necessarily unsound. It is based on incorrect and inadequate knowledge of the physical world. If you look for ultimate reality in the outward and visible world you will never, in your quest of it, get beyond the high-water mark of the physical science of your day; and each fresh advance of science is liable to sweep away the metaphysical sand-castles that you have built. If Aristotle had known as much about the universe around us as we know to-day, his metaphysics in general, and his theology in particular, would have been widely different from what they were.

Its method is unsound. Deductive reasoning from arbitrary, not to say fantastic, premises is not the way to interpret the universe. When Aristotle passed beyond the range of his own observation of nature, and of the experiences which he had collected and collated, he was apt to theorize recklessly, and to draw conclusions from his theories for which there was no foundation in fact.

Its philosophy is unsound. Even when examined in the light of its own first principles it is found wanting. God is wholly immaterial. If He were not He would not be eternal. So Aristotle tells us. But where is pure immateriality to be found? Not in the world of matter and form. Where, then, but in a world of its own, a world of pure immateriality, a world of *pure form*.

But is there such a world? Surely not. On Aristotle's own showing, matter and form are correlative terms.<sup>1</sup> It follows that form which is wholly divorced from matter is as unreal as matter which is wholly divorced from form. Aristotle expressly denies the existence of pure or "prime" matter. The four "elements" are ultimates beyond which the analysis of matter cannot be carried. What right, then, has he to postulate the existence of pure form? To pass from the *antithesis*, the correlated opposition, of matter and form, to the *dualism* of the world of matter-and-form and a world of pure form, is an illogical procedure which involves a complete dislocation of thought. Like all other correlated opposites, matter and form vary together in inverse proportion. The purer the form, the less material is the substance; but it is by perpetual self-transcendence, not by abrupt abstraction from matter, that form rises towards the level of its own ideal purity; and if it could attain to that level, if it could finally dissociate itself from matter, it would be form no longer. The cancellation of either term in a true antithesis involves the disappearance of the other.<sup>2</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> "Matter", says Dr. Ross, "is not for Aristotle a definite thing, as we speak of matter in opposition to mind. It is a purely relative term. It is the materials of a thing as opposed to the structure that holds them together. It is the determinable as opposed to the determinant. And the distinction of matter and form may be drawn at many different levels within the concrete thing. In the realm of art iron, which is the finished product of the smelter, is matter for the founder."

<sup>2</sup> When an antithesis is all-embracing, the opposite terms, the positive and the negative poles, meet at last and become one. But the antithesis of form and matter is not all-embracing. It embraces the outward world only. It covers no more than

world of form and matter would have been transcended. *Pure formlessness* would have taken the place of pure form.

Then, again, there can be no form, whether pure or impure, apart from a conscious subject. Aristotle looked at form from two points of view. Sometimes he thought of it as "sensible appearance", sometimes as "intelligible structure". As "sensible experience" form must be the object of sense-experience. As "intelligible structure" it must be the object of intellectual apprehension. If pure form is the object of sense-experience, whose are the senses that perceive it? If it is the object of intellectual apprehension, whose is the intellect that apprehends it? Must it not come back at last, for the guarantee of its intrinsic reality, to Aristotle himself, who found it as the ultimate element—or so it seemed to him—in his analysis of the world around him, the world which his senses revealed to him and which his intellect sought to understand? If God is pure form, He must be certified as such—to man—by human senses and the human intellect. And because, if such a certificate could be given, it would be subversive of God's divinity, and therefore self-contradictory, we are driven to conclude that, as an effective guarantee, it will never be given, and that in fact there is no such God. No such God; and no such world. A world of pure form is as unreal as a mirage or a dream.

As unreal and as *unsubstantial*. Is Aristotle justified in thinking of pure form as *substance*? No, he is precluded from doing so by his own definition of "substance". For what is substance? "That which is an arc of the circle of being. The extremes of matter and form do *not* meet.



not asserted of a subject, but of which everything else is asserted." Now form, whether as "sensible appearance" or as "intelligible structure" is always used predicatively. There must be some *thing* which appears to our senses; some *thing* the structure of which we can try to understand. That something may fitly be spoken of as substance. To speak of either the appearance or the structure as substance is a misuse of language. "Form", says Dr. Ross, when expounding Aristotle's analysis of becoming "indicates a such, never a this; a characteristic, never the concrete thing that bears it." How, then, can form be identified with substance? "The substance is the whole thing, including the qualities, relations, etc., which form its essence." The "whole thing" is surely a "this". The qualities, relations, etc., constitute its "such". It is true that Aristotle "sometimes thinks of substance, not as the individual concrete thing, but as the essential nature and (that) this double meaning pervades his whole treatment of substance". But this is confused thinking. The two meanings are incompatible with one another; and of the two it is the former which conforms to Aristotle's formal definition of substance, and also to reason and common sense. Pure form, then, is not the same as pure substance. If God is pure form we must not think of Him as substance. But if God is not substantially real, what is He?

From this impossible God let us pass on to the "intelligences", the second order of beings which are both substantial and unchangeable. What part do they play in the cosmic order?

"Aristotle's astronomical system", says Dr. Ross, "is briefly as follows: The heavenly bodies consist of the

fifth element, free from generation and destruction, and moving not like the terrestrial elements in straight lines but in a circle. The universe consists of a series of concentric spheres. The earth is a sphere of no great relative size at rest at the centre of the universe. The outer shell of the universe—the 'first heaven'—is a finite sphere containing what we now call the fixed stars. These stars have no motion of their own, but are carried round by the uniform rotation of the first heaven once in twenty-four hours. . . . The movement of the first heaven is due to action of God operating as the object of love and desire. For Aristotle space is finite; there is no void; uniform movement must be either in a straight line or circular; and the uniform rotation of a sphere is the only movement which can go on eternally without change of direction and without requiring either a void or infinite space. Thus Aristotle is enabled to deduce the existence of the celestial sphere and to explain its rotation as the nearest approximation possible for a corporeal thing to the eternal unchanging activity of the divine self-knowledge. But the proper motions of the sun, moon and planets involve spheres rotating in directions different from that of the first heaven, and this movement he explains by the action not of God, but of a separate motive agent for each sphere—the 'intelligences' of the Schoolmen. . . . These (like God) move as ends, i.e. they move by being desired and loved. Their relation to the first mover is not specified, but since the first mover is the single ruler of the universe, 'that on which the heaven and the whole of nature depend', we must suppose that it moves the intelligences as the object of their desire and love."

Serious criticism of such a grotesque astronomy is out of place to-day. It owed its being to Aristotle's

reliance on intellect, pure and simple, for the solution of all ultimate—or ulterior—problems. Reliance on intellect, pure and simple, on mind operating “in accordance with the principles of thought’s own distinctive working”;<sup>1</sup> on thought “disentangled” from other “functions of our being and attempting a pure development of its own”,<sup>2</sup>—leads to the *a priori* construction of the universe by deductive reasoning from arbitrary assumptions; leads to the movement of thought through mazes of words and phrases and abstract conceptions instead of through the mazes of our own experiences of concrete things; leads to an appeal to the rules of a logical game taking the place of the appeal to experience, sensible or intuitional, as the surest available test of truth. The latter appeal is now recognized as indispensable in physical science; but there are levels of thought on which the Aristotelian tradition still survives, and the mind is content to feed itself with words and to move, through chains of abstract reasoning, to conclusions, the validity of which, if the reasoning process may pass as correct, is assumed to be beyond dispute. To this we shall presently return.

The third of Aristotle’s metaphysical extras became the centre of a whirlpool of controversy which agitated for centuries the metaphysical schools of the Middle Ages. It will be remembered that Aristotle regarded sense-experience proper as infallible, and man, *quod* body-and-soul, as an integral part of the world of matter and form which sense-experience reveals to us. To the body-and-soul of man, which is substantial but subject to change and therefore perishable, Aris-

<sup>1</sup> *Appearance and Reality*, by F. H. Bradley.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

totle added what he called the *active reason*, which, like God and the "intelligences", is unchangeable as well as substantial, and is therefore eternal. In what relation does the active reason stand to the individual body-and-soul? In virtue of his "nutritive", his "sensitive" and his "passively reasonable" souls man belongs to the world of matter and form. In virtue of his "active reason" he belongs to the world of pure form. But does the individual "he" belong to the latter world? Is the imperishable "active reason" an essential part of the individual self?

The answer to this question is that the active reason is *in* the body-and-soul, but having come into it from outside is separable from it, and being imperishable survives it. The body-and-soul is mortal. This is quite clear. Does the *person* die when his body-and-soul dies, or does he share in the imperishability of the active reason? "It is clearly implied", says Dr. Ross, "that active reason, though it is in the soul, goes beyond the individual; we may fairly suppose Aristotle to mean that it is identical in all individuals." But personality varies from individual to individual, and we cannot therefore identify it with what is identical in all individuals. There is a passage (in the *Metaphysics*) quoted by Dr. Ross, which seems to point to the same conclusion (Aristotle is speaking of the influence of old age on the mental life):

"Intuitive thought and contemplation then die away through the destruction of something else within (the body) but are themselves impassible. But reasoning, and loving or hating are affections not of reason<sup>1</sup> but of its possessor, in so far as he possesses

<sup>1</sup> By "reason" is meant of course the "active reason."

it. Hence, when he perishes there is neither memory nor love; for these belonged not to reason but to the composite being which has perished."

If the "composite being" which loves and reasons and remembers perishes in the hour of death it is difficult to believe that the personality of the man, the *self*, shares in the immortality of the active reason, of which Aristotle expressly says that "when it has been separated [from the composite being] it is that only which it is essentially, and this alone is immortal and eternal".

The following passage in Renan's *Averroes et l'Averroïsme* bears directly on this problem:

*"L'extreme précision avec laquelle le peripatétisme avait séparé les deux éléments de l'entendement, l'élément relatif et l'élément absolu devait l'amener à scinder la personnalité humaine dans la question de l'immortalité. Malgré les efforts de l'aristotelisme orthodoxe pour prêter au maître une doctrine aussi conforme que possible aux idées chrétiennes l'opinion du philosophe à cet égard ne saurait être douteuse. L'intellect universel est incorruptible et séparable du corps ; l'intellect individuel est périssable et finit avec le corps."*

The Arabian interpreters of Aristotle, to whom Christendom owed in large measure its introduction to his philosophy in the Twelfth Century A.D., are equally clear on this point.

*"Tous les Arabes", continues Renan, "ont compris de la sorte la pensée d'Aristote. L'intellect actif est seul immortel ; or l'intellect actif n'est autre chose que la raison commune de l'humanité : l'humanité seule est donc éternelle. La providence divine, dit le Commentateur, a accordé à l'être périssable la force de se reproduire, pour*

*le consoler et lui donner à défaut d'autre cette espece d'immortalité."*

The Arabian Aristotelians had rightly interpreted the mind of the Master. There is no place in a sense-bound cosmology for personal immortality. For one who regards "sense-perception proper as infallible", the surrounding world, the world of matter and form, is intrinsically real, in the sense of being in itself what it seems to be; and the death of the "composite being" who is an integral part of that world of change and growth and decay, is the death of the man himself. "Active reason", like the "intelligences" and the "prime mover", belongs to the world of pure form, and shares with them in the unreality of that world. Its being is "notional", not "real". It exists, not as the object of experience, in any sense of that word, but as the conclusion to a chain of quasi-logical reasoning from arbitrary and largely fantastic premises. The active bears to the passive reason the relation of form to matter. So we are told. But form and matter are correlated opposites, mutually dependent, not mutually exclusive, whereas between the two reasons there is fixed, as in every dualism, an impassable gulf. In that gulf personality loses itself irretrievably when it tries to follow the active reason into the world beyond death. It is for *self* that one desires immortality; and it is *self* that desires it and (if its desire is fulfilled) achieves it. And in this as in other matters "active reason" is a poor substitute for the real self.

Professor Adamson, who has not allowed himself to be dazzled by the glamour of a great name, says that "the whole Aristotelian metaphysic is a combination

of quite incongruous and incoherent parts".<sup>1</sup> This judgment is, I think, as just as it is severe. When Aristotle, in the course of his metaphysical speculation, got out of his depth (as all metaphysicians are doomed to do), he was, to speak plainly, a muddle-headed thinker rather than "the master of those who know". His initial assumption that sense-perception proper is infallible, and therefore that the world of matter and form is intrinsically real, precluded him from building up any metaphysical system, *except on a strictly materialistic basis*, which was not "a combination of incongruous and incoherent parts". The Stoics, who tried "to overcome the dualism that is inherent in the Platonic-Aristotelian philosophy",<sup>2</sup> could not do so except by relapsing into thoroughgoing and uncompromising materialism. Their aim was monistic; and they so far achieved it as to be able to think of the universe as a whole and thus prepare the way for a system of ethics in which submission to the whole was to be the master principle. But they were able to think of the universe as a whole because, and only because, they thought of it as wholly corporeal. "The Stoics start", says Professor Adamson, "with a quite definite view of real existence—one might even call it a definition of reality. . . . In concrete expression the view is that the real is the corporeal: nothing is real that is not extended and resistant."<sup>3</sup> From this

<sup>1</sup> *Development of Greek Philosophy*, by Professor Adamson.

<sup>2</sup> "However much Aristotle may object to the Platonic statement of the two worlds, he retains the feature which is of fundamental importance in that doctrine. He recognizes a difference of kind" [between the two worlds]. *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

position they were able to pass on to the conception of the universe as a "complete whole, one and continuous"; and so to transcend the dualism in which Aristotle, as a speculative thinker, was hopelessly entangled. Yet "the real substratum of the Stoic system is in the Aristotelian system."<sup>1</sup> The Stoics did but work out to its logical conclusion Aristotle's initial assumption that the world which sense-perception reveals to us is intrinsically real.

<sup>1</sup> *Development of Greek Philosophy*, by Professor Adamson.



### CHAPTER III

#### FROM ARISTOTLE TO AQUINAS

I HAVE said that modern thought in the West, both theological and secular, is in the main the product of two confluent streams of tendency,—the naturalistic intellectualism of the Greeks and the supernaturalistic theism of the Jews. I have traced the movement of the former through the channel of Aristotle's master mind, in whose philosophy it made a near approach to finality. From what source did the latter stream descend? Let us first consider its geographical origin. We have seen that the leading features of Greek scenery were responsible, in no small measure, for the intellectualist trend of Greek philosophy. In like manner it may be said that the scenery of the Desert was responsible, in no small measure, for the supernaturalistic trend of Jewish philosophy; in other words, for its becoming the theistic theology with which Greek thought was destined to ally itself.

The Desert is in a sense an abstraction. It has an infinitude of its own; but it is an infinitude of emptiness. Many years ago an eminent Anglican divine,<sup>1</sup> preaching at Oxford, said in my hearing, that in the sphere of religious belief the East differed from the West in possessing "the intuition of totality". His words were well chosen. But he omitted to say that the

<sup>1</sup> Dr. B. F. Westcott, afterwards Bishop of Durham.

intuition takes widely different forms in the Near East, where the most characteristic scenery is that of the Desert, and the Far East, where the infinitude of the Desert gives way to the infinitude of forest and fertile plain and mighty mountain ranges in which fertilizing rivers take their rise. The difference is that between a totality of barrenness and emptiness and a totality of fertility and fulness. As such it is the difference between Allah (and his precursor Jehovah) and Brahma; between the personification of an infinite abstraction, which controls from without the life of man and of the world in which he dwells, and the personification of the Infinite Life which is at the heart of the world and of the being of man. And the influence of the Desert on religious belief and thought may be looked at from another point of view. When one is in the Desert, though barrenness and loneliness are around one, the heavens are above, with the glory of the sun by day and of the stars by night. If, then, one's thought turns towards God, it is towards a God who is in the heavens, controlling the world from above, but in no sense or degree entering into its life. In the Desert one is alone with God, but one has no sense of oneness with Him. The connecting medium of life is wholly wanting. It is in the Desert, then, that self-conscious, self-theorizing supernaturalism—the supernaturalism which at once unifies and externalizes what is ultimately real in the universe, and so calls into being a world beyond and above Nature—may be said to have taken its rise.

An alliance between the intellectualism of the Greek world and the supernaturalism of the Desert lands was in a sense predestined. For the weakness of an intel-

lectualist philosophy is that it has no intuitional experience, whether poetical or mystical, to build its system of thought upon; and that it has therefore no premises from which it can, with any assurance, deduce its speculative conclusions. In the absence of such premises its reasoning becomes so much playing with words, so much beating of the air. Hence it is ready to welcome a teaching about the ultimate mysteries of existence which claims to have had a supernatural origin, and which is impressive by the very intensity of conviction with which it is held by its prophets and apostles. Such a teaching was offered to Greek intellectualism by the religious beliefs of Judæo-Christianity; and the history of the elaboration of Christian theology is the history of the eager response to that teaching of the speculative thought of the Hellenic world.

Let us go back to Aristotle.

While the West was waiting to renew its acquaintance with the mass of his writings, which, as we have seen, were lost sight of for many centuries, what preparation had Christendom been making for the reception of his philosophy into the theological current of its life? During those centuries the influence of Greek philosophy on the speculative thought and inner life of Christendom had been on the whole Platonic rather than Aristotelian. Speaking of the relation of the Platonic to the Aristotelian philosophy Professor Adamson says "The popular antithesis of Platonism and Aristotelianism exaggerates but does not altogether mistake the nature of the relation." The popular antithesis is embodied in the familiar saying that everyone who thinks is either a born Platonist or a

born Aristotelian. It would be equally, but not more, true to say that every cultured mind is naturally interested either in poetry and letters generally, or in physical science. The fundamental difference between the two philosophies lies in the fact that Plato was at heart a poet, but in a sense which far outranged both in width and depth the conception of poetry that is implicit in his own formal condemnation of it; whereas Aristotle was an intellectualist, pure and simple.

But the two philosophies had much in common. Both sought for the "real as such" in the world without rather than in the world within, in the objects of sense-perception and intellectual cognition rather than in that which guarantees (if it does guarantee) the reality of those objects—the percipient and cognitive *self*. The new world of *formless reality* which self-awareness reveals and, in revealing, certifies as real, had no place in either the Platonic or the Aristotelian system of thought. For both philosophers the outward world, the world of generation and change, was eternal, and being eternal was as real as it seemed to be. But as that world could not satisfy their desire for communion with the "real as such"—for both philosophers assumed that the real as such is unchangeable as well as eternal—they were compelled, in their quest of absolute reality, to create, each for himself, another world; a world which was at once substantial and unchangeable, a world which was distinct from the world of generation and change, and yet intimately connected with it, as being needed to explain it. Plato found Reality in the realm of Ideas or Divine Essences, as distinguished from the realm of concrete things—imperfect copies of their respective archetypes

—which are ever changing and passing. Aristotle found it in the realm of Pure Form, as distinguished from the world of matter and form.

In their respective attitudes towards their higher worlds the difference between the poetic and the scientific temperaments made itself felt. As Professor Adamson has well said, "Aristotle's objection to Plato's theory of Ideas is the outcome of his superior knowledge of physical nature and of his deeper conviction of its reality." One feels that for him the world of matter and form is the real world, and that he would have liked to make that world explain itself, without the aid of the metaphysical extras (as I have presumed to call them) which he brought in from outside; but that he could not bring himself to make so complete a break with the speculative thought and religious belief of his day. One feels, on the other hand, that for Plato the world of Ideas is the real world, and that the concrete things that belong to the world around us are but "shadow-shapes that come and go". Plato's philosophy allowed him to believe in personal immortality; or, if it did not, he ignored its silent protest. For Aristotle the individual soul, indissolubly linked to the body, belonged to the world of matter and form; and in that world there was nothing immortal except itself.

Yet the broad fact remains that both philosophies sought for reality outside the final guarantor of reality, the self; that both accepted the world of generation and change as eternal and therefore as real, in the sense which eternity connotes; that both, being compelled to transcend that world in their quest of changeless reality, invented new worlds in order to

explain the familiar world, and were therefore dualistic to the core.

In the early days of Christendom Greek intellectualism co-operated, as we have seen, with Jewish supernaturalism in the work of shaping Christian theology and giving the Church its creeds. That was the age of Church Councils; an age of vehement disputation, of bold speculation (within prescribed but vaguely defined limits), of condemnation of heresies, of formulation of dogmas. Greek philosophy had to accommodate itself to certain fundamental beliefs in which the foundations of the Christian faith were laid,—belief in the Divine inspiration and Divine authority of the Scriptures; in the temporal Creation of the world; in the Fall and Redemption of man; in the Divinity of Christ and the Holy Spirit; in the Resurrection of the body; in Judgment, Heaven and Hell. The attempt to define and elucidate those beliefs gave rise to a succession of problems which Greek philosophy was only too happy to be allowed to handle. It was so busy handling them that it did not think of asking the beliefs themselves for their credentials. And it was able to handle them (on the whole) to the satisfaction of the Christian Church because its thinking and reasoning were logical rather than intuitional.

Was Aristotle's *Organon* studied in those days? The part that it played in Christendom from the time of Boethius, its translator into Latin, onward will be considered in the latter part of this chapter. Boethius lived about 500 A.D. Before his time, whatever use may have been made of Aristotle's writing, we may safely assume that the leaven of his logic was at work. For, after all, Aristotle's logic was but the systematic

exposition of the Greek way of thinking and reasoning, a way in which words—mistaken for things on the one hand and degraded to the level of symbols on the other—were used as counters in a game of dialectical skill, with the result that propositions (divorced from the judgments which they stood for) were apt to be regarded as intrinsically true, whatever those who formulated them might have meant by them, and whatever meanings or shades of meaning different minds might find in them. This is the logic which dominated thought in the Graeco-Roman world when Christian believers were beginning to think about the beliefs which they professed; and this is the logic which has ever dominated, and still dominates, theological speculation in the high places of the Church.

Its attractiveness for the Doctors of the Church, especially in the days when dogma was still in the making, is easily explained. I have said that Greek thinking and reasoning were logical rather than *intuitional*. Intuitional reasoning has indeed a secret logic of its own; but the rules of that logic are unknown, and as the terms in intuitional reasoning are *live* words, as far removed as possible from the status of symbols, it is useless for the purposes of the controversial game,—the game which was so dear to the Greek mind, and which enabled the Greek mind to play a leading part in the shaping of Christian doctrine. Intuitional reasoning is the reasoning of the poet, the artist, the musician, the prophet, the mystic,—and all their kindred. Freedom is the breath of its being. Defiance of dogmatic coercion prepares the way for the sincere self-expression at which it aims. It has therefore ever been the foster-mother of heresies;

and there could be no abiding place for it in the philosophy of a Church which was trying to establish a rule of faith for all its members.

That was one reason why the Church, in its early days, was ready to ally itself, so far as method was concerned, with a philosophy which, like that of the Greeks, was logical rather than intuitional. And there was another reason. What is essential in intuitional reasoning is its subconscious measurement of *qualitative* gradation, i.e. of spiritual values, in the great matters that attract it. Logical reasoning, on the other hand, (of the orthodox type), is essentially dualistic, bringing things as it does to the issue of an unqualified Yes or an unqualified No; and this commends it to the religious mind of the orthodox type (in its speculative moods) which starts with the fundamental dualism of the Supernatural and Nature, and has to bring all its conceptions under the control of that paramount assumption.

For both those reasons it was easy for Christian faith to wed itself to Greek thought, and for an elaborate dogmatic theology to grow up as the offspring of that marriage.

Yet there was much intuitional thinking, both inside and outside the Church, in the early centuries of the Christian era. For intuitional reasoning is the outcome of inward experiences—convictions, illuminations, visions of reality—which set in motion the secret logical processes of the subconscious self. And such experiences are most frequent in an age when men are awaking from the slumber of tradition and routine; and new ideas, new beliefs, new ideals are in the air that they breathe. Such an age was that which was



inaugurated in the Western world by the missionary labours of the Disciples of Christ, and—on a larger scale—of St. Paul. During that age, which lasted for some centuries, what I may call Platonic influences were at work in the world, side by side with the more strictly Hellenic or logical influences, which, as we have just seen, were helping to shape the official theology of the Christian Church. And the "Platonic" influences were ready to welcome, and admit into intimate communion with themselves, mystical or semi-mystical experiences and conceptions from the Near and the Far East.

Prominent names in the Platonic tradition are those of Plotinus the great Neo-Platonist (204–270) and "Dionysius the Areopagite" (about 500). A detailed exposition of the Neo-Platonic philosophy would be out of place in this book. It greatly exalted the spiritual side of existence; but it did so at the expense of the physical world, for it turned its back on the latter, and made no attempt to explain it or help it to explain itself. Indeed, so far as it took any notice of it, it seems to have thought of it as evil, for it regarded the descent of the soul into corporeality as a fall from grace. Like other Greek philosophies, it sought for ultimate reality outside the self of the seeker. It starts with the Primal Being, which is One, Infinite and Good (in the sense of being *the* Good). The Primal Being throws off (1) *Nous*, the perfect knowledge of the One and the archetype of all existing things; (2) the *Soul*, which is universal, but embraces a multitude of individual souls. Many of these, seduced by sensuality and lust, have descended into corporeality. This is a fall from Grace, which must be retrieved by the soul

retracing its steps; in other words, by leading a virtuous life, and, on a higher level, by ascetic practice. The goal of this journey is *ecstatic union with God*.

Plotinus himself is said to have attained to that union four times. If so, he was a genuine mystic; and we may regard his own philosophy as the translation of a mystical experience into an elaborate theory of the universe,—a sublime theory, but one which fell short of its own perfection, in that it was not crowned by the supreme conception which the experience imperatively demands from its interpreters,—the conception of God as the Real Self of man. Neo-Platonism, as expounded by Plotinus, deduces the soul from its *theory* of God as the Primal Being, instead of deducing God from the mystical *vision* of Reality in the inmost self of the mystic.<sup>1</sup>

When Neo-Platonism died out as an independent philosophy, it continued to live through its influence on the theology and inner life of Christendom, an influence which was carried on and widely diffused by the anonymous writer who was known as "Dionysius the Areopagite".<sup>2</sup> This name was attached to a number of theological writings of unknown origin, which profoundly influenced medieval thought. In those writings a beautiful, semi-mystical, deeply poetical philosophy was expounded, the framework of which their author had undoubtedly borrowed from Neo-Platonism. A

<sup>1</sup> Neo-Platonism is Indian idealism—the idealism of the Upanishads—*Hellenized*. Plotinus knows too much about the inner constitution of the Universe. The philosophy of the Upanishads is intuitional and poetical. In Neo-Platonism the intellectual element encroaches on the intuitional, and dialectic encroaches on poetry.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xvii. 34.

Christian himself, he had brought his system into harmony with what he conceived to be the essence of Christianity, and invested it with an *aura* of poetic vision and spiritual aspiration. At heart he was a pantheist, in the sense that he believed in the essential unity of the Universe and the universal immanence of the transcendent God. He thought of the universal life as existing in and through an eternal circle of love, of love for ever flowing forth from, and flowing back to, its Divine Source. His works began to influence theological thought in the West when Erigena (815-877) translated them into Latin. And as "Erigena marks the transition from the older Platonizing philosophy to the more rigid Scholasticism"<sup>1</sup> of the Middle Ages, the Dionysian philosophy may be said to have come into the main stream of Christian belief and thought at a time when its illuminating, transfiguring, uplifting and—in general—spiritualizing influence was beginning to be sorely needed.

To go back to an earlier age. In Gnosticism (Second and Third centuries A.D.) free thinking—intellectual, intuitional and mystical—had run riot, and threatened to break up Christendom into a multitude of independent sects or groups. The Gnostic outlook on the world had much in common with that of Neo-Platonism; but, unlike the Dionysian philosophy (which thought of God as Love, at once creative and receptive), it tended to emphasize the more pessimistic side of the doctrine of emanation, regarding the successive emanations as products of gradual deterioration, and the descent into corporeality as a fall from grace; and passing on from this to the conception of the physical

<sup>1</sup> *Encycl. Brit.*, 14th Edtn., Vol. VIII, p. 687.

world as a fallen world, and of matter as intrinsically evil. Essentially dualistic itself, it helped to infect Christian theology with dualistic ideas through the very efforts which were made to combat its dualism. But what was most significant in its influence on Christianity was that, by provoking a reaction against its own extreme individualism, it did much to promote in the Church a movement in the direction of centralization, discipline, dogmatic definition of doctrine and the formulation of a rigid rule of faith; a movement which was inevitable in any case, if the Church was to become a fully organized society, but which Gnosticism undoubtedly accelerated, and to that extent helped to mis-direct. The movement, though retarded by Platonizing tendencies in Christian thought, continued to make headway through the succeeding centuries, till at last the official philosophy of the Church, firmly established on a dogmatic basis and supported on the one hand by Scholastic logic and on the other hand by authority centralized in Rome, having broken off all connexion with Platonism, was ready, as we shall see, to ally itself with the severely intellectualist philosophy of Aristotle.

While the Platonic element in Greek thought, attracting to itself by the magnetism of its latent poetry ideas and beliefs of a more or less mystical character from the Near and the Far East, was helping to leaven Judaeo-Christian theology in the direction of widening and spiritualizing its outlook on life, what part was the Aristotelian philosophy playing in the evolution of Western thought? Its direct influence on the thought and faith of Christendom was slight. For though the Greek way of thinking and reasoning,

which Aristotle may be said to have systematized and formulated, played a prominent part in the elaboration of Christian doctrine, it did so, one may well believe, *quâ* Greek rather than *quâ* Aristotelian. But Aristotle's indirect influence on Western thought, through his lineal successors, the Stoics, was considerable; and it has in some measure persisted, though intermittently, to the present day. The Stoics, in their cosmology, did away with the dualism of Aristotle's two worlds; and they did this in the way which was most in keeping with the true spirit of his philosophy—by absorbing the higher world into the lower. They took quite seriously Aristotle's twofold conception—of the infallibility of sense-perception and of the eternity of the world which it reveals. From this they drew the logical conclusion which Aristotle shrank from drawing,—that the physical world ("Nature", as they called it) is the "All of Being", the spiritual world being merely an aspect of it. And from this they passed on to the further conclusion—a conclusion which bore directly on their own conduct of life—that, inasmuch as the universe is an undivided whole, they owed undivided allegiance to it, and that "in its will [as revealed in the master tendencies of Nature] was their peace".

The Stoics thus came as near to a monistic solution of the supreme problem as is possible for a materialistic philosophy. As near, but no nearer. When they deified Nature they meant to deny the Supernatural: in effect they denied the spiritual; for they implicitly denied the soul. The reality of the physical world, as they conceived of it, was the counterpart of its eternity. But it was as a whole, and only as a whole, that the

physical world—the world of generation and change—was eternal. The soul of man did not share in its eternity. For body and soul were at once an undivided whole and an integral part of the world of generation and change. It followed that when the body died, the soul died with it. The claim of the soul—the self-conscious spirit—to intrinsic reality, as being the guarantor of the reality of the physical world, was never met by the Stoics. But as long as that claim persists, the attempt of speculative thought to establish the unity of the universe on a materialistic basis is bound to miscarry. And the claim will never be withdrawn or even abated, for it is inherent in the unique and otherwise inexplicable experience of self-awareness.

But whatever judgment may be passed on the metaphysics of Stoicism, it must be admitted that there are elements of real grandeur in its ethics, and that the spirit of devotion to duty and heroic resignation that pervades it has been a contribution of lasting value to the building up of human character. There was no reward after death for the Stoic to hope for, no punishment for him to fear. The hideous doctrine of an eternity of torment in a quasi-material hell—the fear of which has overshadowed Christendom from its earliest days and has not yet passed away—cast no shadow on his life. He owed undivided allegiance to universal Nature, and he was to prove his loyalty to it by leading a virtuous life. This conception of morality was in keeping with the Roman tradition of service to the State; and it therefore commended Stoicism to the Roman mind. The devotion of the citizen to the Commonwealth in the days of the Republic was transformed in Stoicism into devotion to the Cosmos,

as the Stoic conceived of it. And the world which he looked out upon was a far wider world than that which was dominated by Imperial Rome. As St. Augustine rose to the conception of the *Civitas Dei*, so the Stoic rose to the conception of the *Civitas Naturae*. If he did not believe in the Kingdom of God, he did at least believe in the Kingdom of Nature. The limitless horizon which faith in the supreme reality of the world of Self or Spirit opens up to thought and desire was not for him. But, within the limits of a horizon which was bounded by the grave, he believed in the unity of the universe, and he strove manfully to translate his belief into practice. So far as Stoicism is alive to-day, it is at war with the spirit of selfish nationalism, which is infinitely potent for evil, as we all know to our cost.

Yet Stoicism, as a rival to Christianity, failed completely; and one cause of its failure was the materialistic bias of its metaphysics. As Buddhism died out of India because (for one thing), *as misrepresented by its monkish interpreters*, it denied what the heart of India has always believed in,—the Ātman or Self; so Stoicism, though it could bear such goodly fruits as the *Discourses* of Epictetus, the *Reflections* of Marcus Aurelius, and the *Hymn to Zeus* of Cleanthes, could not hold its own in competition with a religion which, with all its errors and limitations, did at least believe in the independent reality and immortal destiny of the individual soul.

It was not through the channel of Stoicism that Aristotle's philosophy was to enter as a transforming influence into the thought and life of the Western world. Another channel was being prepared for it. The time for the reception of it by official Christianity as a welcome ally was still far distant; but even in the

earlier centuries of the Christian era the need of such an alliance was beginning to be felt by the Church. We have seen that for many of those centuries the influence of Greek thought, whether inside or outside the Church, on the development of Christian doctrine was on the whole Platonic rather than Aristotelian, poetical and mystical rather than logical and intellectual. But in proportion as the institutionalization of the Christian religion made progress, as authority became centralized, as the government of the Church became more fully organized, so did the poetic and mystical elements in Christian belief and thought recede into the background. For there is always something personal and individual in poetry, and still more so in mystical experience; and what is personal and individual in belief, if it goes its own way, may easily become heretical and unamenable to centralized control. Hence the practical need for the rationalization and formal definition of religious doctrine, and the establishment of it, as far as possible, on an intellectual basis. If by the religion of a man is meant his actual attitude towards the ultimate problems of existence, then in strictness there are as many creeds as there are individual souls. As recognition of free thought in religion is incompatible with the centralization of doctrine, which is a necessary basis of Church organization, there is a constant tendency at the headquarters of a Church towards the dogmatic definition of religious truth, the enforcement of subscription to defined dogma as a condition of Church membership, and the elimination of heresy—of each heresy as it arises. This war against free thought is a "necessary evil"; very necessary, if the organization of the Church is



to be effective and lasting; but also a very real evil, in that it is ever tending to de-spiritualize, formalize and even mechanicalize religion, as indeed the history of every great religious movement clearly proves.

During all those earlier centuries the Church was waiting for a systematized philosophy, the outcome of logical rather than intuitional reasoning, to be incorporated in its theology and provide it with a rigid framework of thought.

Such a philosophy was being prepared for it by the study from 500 onwards of so much of Aristotle's *Organon* as had been translated into Latin (with a commentary) by Boethius. This was all that was known of Aristotle's writings in the Latin West till the Twelfth Century. And it was only the earlier and more elementary part of the *Organon* which had been translated. Yet even that little played a very important part in the higher education of the West during those centuries. It was the staple of *Dialectic*, one of the three subjects of the Mediaeval *Trivium* (the other two being *Grammar* and *Rhetoric*). As such it was carefully studied; and its influence as an instrument of mental training was undoubtedly considerable. As time went on, the methods of dialectic, no longer studied merely as a discipline in school, began to be applied to problems of theology. About 1130 the whole of the *Organon* became known to the West. A little later the universities of Paris, Oxford and Cambridge came into being as organized centres of culture and learning, and provided headquarters for the study of the general body of Aristotle's writings, as these were imported into them, between 1200 and 1270.

They came for the most part from two cities—

Cordova and Constantinople. In the Twelfth Century Cordova was a great seat of Arabian culture, which had included, since about 800, the study of some of Aristotle's treatises. Among the Arabian commentators on Aristotle's writing two names are prominent—"Avicenna" in the East (died 1037) and "Averroes" in Spain (died at Cordova 1198). Arabian paraphrases of, and commentaries on, Aristotle's works began to penetrate into the Latin West about 1200 A.D. in the form of Latin translations (sometimes through a Hebrew medium) of treatises, based not on the original Greek but on Arabic versions of the works. Avicenna and Averroës were independent thinkers, and had their own interpretations of Aristotle's philosophy, which had considerable influence on Western thought, though some of their views were combated by Aquinas, and were generally regarded as "heretical".

Constantinople also helped to make Aristotle known in the West, but at a later date. After its capture by the Franks in 1204 Latin clergy settled in the Byzantine Empire and learned Greek and found Greek Manuscripts. Two of these scholars, under the impulse of Aquinas and in collaboration with him, translated into Latin many of the writings of Aristotle between 1260-1270.

Meanwhile that blend of Aristotelian logic and Christian theology which is known as Scholasticism had become the dominant philosophy, or at least the dominant way of philosophizing, in Christendom. The mingling of dialectic and theology was at first tentative and intermittent. As the metaphysical writings of Aristotle became known, the way was open at last for a systematized philosophy to be incorporated in the

theology of the Church, and provide it with the rigid frame-work of thought for which it was waiting. The interpretation of that philosophy, in accordance with the demands of Church doctrine, and the incorporation of it in Christian theology, were the work of the greatest of the Schoolmen, St. Thomas Aquinas.

## CHAPTER IV

### ARISTOTLE AND AQUINAS

IN Scholasticism, of which Aquinas was the most conspicuous exponent, we have the final confluence of two great streams of tendency,—Greek intellectualism and Judaeo-Christian supernaturalism. Before I attempt to study the outcome of that confluence, I must say something as to the psychological genesis of the Supernatural. I will begin by asking a question which, like every other independent thinker, I have already answered implicitly: *Which is the more real, the Knower or the Known?* This is the question of questions in philosophy. On one's answer to it depends in the last resort one's whole outlook on existence.

As the Knower presumably guarantees some measure of reality to the known, one might fairly argue that in doing so he guarantees a fuller measure of reality to himself. For if he does not stand higher, in respect of metaphysical solvency, than the objects of his knowledge, what is the value of his guarantee? But the force of this argument is seldom recognized. The Knower, just because he is the Knower; because his mind is concentrated on knowing; because knowing, and acting on his knowledge, is the main business of his life—is apt to turn his back on his own knowing *self*, and postulate the intrinsic reality of the world which he looks out upon and seeks to know. And the

more eager and successful he is in the pursuit of knowledge, the stronger will be his conviction that the objects of his knowledge are real things, real in a sense which is final and conclusive, and which makes any other conception of reality superfluous.

But the knowing self is not content to be ignored. It follows the Knower, with a persistent demand for recognition, through all his explorations of the knowable world, till at last, on the farthest horizon of that world—be the horizon for him near or far—it reappears as an *anima*, a spirit, a deity, objectively real, and the ultimate source of movement, change and life within the limits of the world which it transcends. When the horizon of knowledge is so near, and the world which it bounds is so narrow, that each object of knowledge is thought of as its own source and centre of reality, the reappearance of the self beyond the horizon of its knowledge gives rise to what is known as *animism*, an imaginative multiplication of spirits or selves, each the mainspring of an individual life or being. When the horizon of knowledge is wide and ever widening; when it becomes, in aim at least, all-embracing; when the familiar world comes to be thought of as a whole and spoken of as *Nature*, then the self reappears on the far side of the horizon as the Supernatural world, and at last as the Supernatural God, "distinct really and in essence from the world". For the reappearance of the self beyond the horizon of knowledge is ever tending to turn that horizon into a fixed and finite boundary line, a final barrier which, *in the nature of things*, neither thought nor imagination can pass.

How, then, can intercourse between Nature and the

Supernatural world be established and maintained? By revelation. By the communication of truth, by the imparting of knowledge, from the farther side of the horizon. For the reception of revealed truth there is needed on the part of the recipient what is known as *faith*. But faith, in the theological sense of the word, is itself a gift from the supernatural world.<sup>1</sup> Even the first faint stirring of the soul in the direction of faith in what is presented to it as revealed truth is a free gift from God. On this point the theologians who profess to formulate revealed truth insist strongly. And from their own point of view they are right to do so. If there were any *natural* recognition on the part of man of the authenticity of an alleged revelation, if there were any *natural* response of the soul to an alleged message from the supernatural world, the boundary line between the two worlds would become indistinct, and the dualism of Nature and Supernature would be in danger of being annulled. The doctrine of the Fall of Man, and the consequent ruin of human nature, had its origin in the instinctive recognition, on the part of the believers in the Supernatural, of the necessity of confining Nature within rigidly defined limits and of keeping the gulf between the two worlds impassable except at the will of the Supernatural God. That, in the last resort, the dualism of Nature and Supernature leads logically to an ultra-Calvinistic fatalism is as clear as that the dualism is

<sup>1</sup> Faith, as a gift from the Supernatural God, must be carefully distinguished from the faith which is the outcome of intuitional reasoning, of the exercise,—whether intellectual or emotional, or both—of what Newman called the “illative sense”.

itself the outcome of the quest of ultimate reality outside the questing self.

The re-discovery, in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries, of Aristotle, the encyclopaedic thinker (as distinguished from the mere logician), awakened in some of the Schoolmen the desire to consolidate an alliance between natural reason and supernatural faith, by incorporating the secular philosophical system which Aristotle had worked out, and which was obviously the product of reason, free from any admixture of poetry or mysticism, in the theological teaching of the Church. Albertus Magnus (1206-1280) led the way in this movement. His great successor, St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), with the fuller knowledge of Aristotle's writings which he obtained from Byzantine sources, carried it on and had gone far towards consummating it, when he broke off abruptly from the task which he had set himself.<sup>1</sup>

In his first important work, the *Summa contra Gentiles*, Aquinas tried to make reason and faith run in double harness. Reason, starting from sense-data, is supposed to attain, unaided by faith, to a knowledge of the existence, the unity, the goodness, the intelli-

<sup>1</sup> Why did he break off abruptly from his task? Apparently, because he suddenly realized that it was not worth completing. We are told that some two years before his death, he fell into a trance and had a vision of some high reality. By the light which that vision shed he saw that the web of words which he had woven with such brilliant ingenuity was a "mean" thing (according to one of his biographers), a thing of "straw" (according to the other). When urged to finish his great work he replied: "I have seen that which makes all that I have written and taught look small to me"; and he told Raynald, his secretary, that he would write no more.

gence, and the will of God. Faith, resting on revelation and authority, attains to a knowledge of God as a purely spiritual being, a knowledge of His inner nature, one might almost say. But reason, unaided by faith, does not necessarily lead to a natural theology. On the contrary, it often leads, as we know from experience, to atheism, materialism and agnosticism. If it is to lead, as a matter of course, to a knowledge of the aforesaid attributes of God, it must do so under the guidance of and, if necessary, under compulsion from faith. The attempt to make reason and faith run in double harness is bound to miscarry unless it is clearly recognized at the outset that faith is to be the leading partner, that it is to have things all its own way, and that it must, if need be, drag reason along with it. But in that case the presence of reason in the partnership is superfluous. That the attempt did miscarry is proved by the downfall of Scholasticism, which was due quite as much to the encroachment of faith on the sphere of reason as to the encroachment of reason on the sphere of faith. From the very beginning certain doctrines were reserved exclusively for treatment by faith. As time went on, doctrine after doctrine was withdrawn from the sphere of reason and transferred to the sphere of faith. This process involved a tacit recognition of the reality and impassability of the gulf which separates Nature from the Supernatural world.

It was after he had written the *Summa contra Gentiles* that Aquinas made the fuller acquaintance with the writings of Aristotle which bore fruit in the great work which he left unfinished,—the *Summa Theologica*. We need not examine that work in detail. It was a



brilliant attempt to do what is impossible. But it was an unfortunate attempt, for it helped to drive Western thought in general, and the theological thought of the Church in particular, into a deep and narrow channel, from which the former has ever since been struggling to extricate itself, and in which the latter is still well content to move.

Let us follow the latter in its movement. What Aristotle did for the Church was to give irresistible impetus and final direction to the tendency towards *dualism* and *dogmatism*, which had been characteristic of the life of the Church from very early days. That Aristotle's own philosophy was dualistic, that there was a gap which could not be bridged between the world of generation and change and the world of Pure Form, is a matter of comparatively minor importance. Aquinas was free, if he pleased, to translate Aristotle's three "Metaphysical Extras" into the notation of the supernaturalistic theology of his Church: to identify the Prime Mover with God the Creator; the Intelligences with His angels and archangels; and the Active Reason with the divinely created soul of each individual man. But he had nothing to gain by doing so. The corresponding doctrines in Christian theology needed no support and asked for no support from that quarter. Therefore the fact that the identity in each case, and especially in the third, could not well be established did not seriously matter. The significance of Aristotle's appearance on the scene in that epoch lies elsewhere. There are two features of his philosophy through which he exercised a profound and, as it seems to me, an evil influence on the theology (and practical life) of the Church, and on Western thought

generally. The naïve "realism"<sup>1</sup> of his sense-bound cosmology is one of these. The detachment from reality of his word-bound logic is the other.

Let us first consider the latter. We can approach it from the former. The two are closely connected. Aristotle was so fully assured of the intrinsic reality of the objects of sense-experience, so fully assured that each of these was complete in itself and real within its own limits, that when names had been found for them, he assumed that for purposes of argument he was free to forget the things and concentrate his mind on their names; he assumed, in other words, that reasoning "notionally"<sup>2</sup> about the names was equivalent to reasoning "really" about the things. Hence his faith in the supreme authority and universal applicability of the Law of Contradiction, and in the absolute cogency of syllogistic reasoning.

But had not the Aristotelian logic been in use for many centuries before the days of Aquinas? Undoubtedly it had. But the discovery of Aristotle as the encyclopaedic thinker, and the consequent acceptance of him by the Schoolmen as "the philosopher" *par excellence*, added immensely to his prestige as the logician, and led to a position of such unquestioned supremacy being assigned to his logic, that it became heresy (one might almost say) to dispute or even cast doubt on its authority. In particular, it was accepted

<sup>1</sup> Here and elsewhere I use the word "realism" in the sense which it ordinarily bears; but I do so under protest; for in that usage there is implicit a conception of reality, the validity of which it is the purpose of this book to contest.

<sup>2</sup> Cardinal Newman, in one of his works, opposes *notional* to *real* assent. The opposition holds good, one may surely assume, in respect of the reasoning by which assent is secured.

by the Catholic Church as the orthodox way of reasoning for all minds and for all the purposes of the Church; and that Church is still loyal to it with a loyalty which sometimes rises to the level of fanatical devotion.<sup>1</sup>

Let us go back to the Law of Contradiction. We

<sup>1</sup> That I am not exaggerating when I use the word "fanatical" the following passages in a handbook on *Logic* by a Jesuit father (Rev. R. F. Clarke), which is still in print, fully prove: "The Aristotelian Logic, the Aristotelian Metaphysics the Aristotelian Psychology have never been improved upon allowing for certain modifications introduced by Christianity, as regards the substance of the doctrine taught." "Since the days of St. Thomas [Aquinas] there is no fresh foundation of philosophical truth to be laid, no fresh system to invent, save by inventing falsity in the place of Truth." "The importance of the study of logic is derived from its undeniable claim to a universal dominion over the minds of men. No one can ever think correctly unless he thinks logically. No one can judge aright unless his judgment is one which logic can approve. No one can arrive at well-grounded conclusions unless he argues in conformity with the laws of logic. He who professes a system of philosophy, or theology, or science, which is in any respect opposed to logical principles, thereby declares his system to be false and irrational, and himself an intellectual impostor." "On the Principle of Contradiction all proof is based, both direct and indirect. It enunciates the first Principle of Being, and therefore precedes in the order of reason any other possible statement. It therefore underlies all thinking. It is implied in every act of thought in every assertion we make. It is a necessity of our reason. He who refuses to acknowledge its universal supremacy, commits thereby intellectual suicide. . . . If the Law of Contradiction can be set aside in a single case, all religion, all philosophy, all truth, all possibility of consequent thinking disappear for ever." These passages speak for themselves. I am tempted to infer from them that vehement assertion was the only kind of reasoning with which their author was familiar. If so, he was a worthy member of the Church which coined the phrase "dogmatic fact".

have seen that this law holds good when we are dealing with individual concrete happenings and individual concrete things. When we pass beyond these, when we enter a region of abstractions its authority weakens; and at last its writ ceases to run. Reflecting as it does the dualistic trend of human speech and popular thought, it is ever tending to react on its source, and, by giving official recognition to a defect in our way of thinking and speaking which we are constantly striving, instinctively and sub-consciously, to correct, to make dualism the dominant religion and philosophy of the world. Though it does not formally authorize us to confound not-A with the opposite of A, not-good with bad, not-high with low, not-sweet with bitter, it is ever tempting us to do so; and so far as we yield to that temptation we acquire a predominatingly dualistic outlook on life. The great antitheses which confront us whenever we begin to think about the qualities and tendencies of things, and which, on the higher levels of thought (where our very abstractions seem to become substantial), have a wider and wider range and at last become all-embracing,—break up under the control of that law into opposite compartments of thought, or groups of things, or states of being, between which we are called upon to make our choice. The recognition of gradation in the world around us and within us—the quantitative measurement of which has made physical science possible, and the qualitative measurement of which (by emotional experience and intuitional reasoning) is the only sure foundation of a sane spiritual science—is strictly forbidden by the logic of Yes or No.

No wonder, then, that the Catholic Church, which

had informally based its theology on the supreme dualism of Nature and the Supernatural, was ready to welcome a formal alliance with the dualistic logic of Aristotle. And the tendency towards that consummation had been at work from the earliest days of the Christian era. Against it the Platonizing movements of thought, both within and without the Church, with their reliance on intuition and vision, had fought for eight centuries—but fought in vain. The dualism which is inherent in the root idea of the Supernatural, reinforced by the practical need for the establishment of a rule of faith for the whole Church and the consequent formulation of Christian doctrine, was too strong for them. With the recognition of Aristotle as “the master of those who knew”, his logic was finally accepted as the only orthodox way of reasoning; and the study of it was authoritatively prescribed as the only effective form of mental training. And when, in the course of time, the sphere of supernatural faith encroached continuously on the sphere of natural reason, and the necessity for reasoning about great matters progressively declined, though logic itself tended to become a game played with words and propositions as counters, rather than an instrument for the attainment of truth, the dualism of the Aristotelian logic, far from falling into disrepute, was transferred by the Church into the very heart of her theology and made the mainspring of her philosophy, her policy and her practical life.

And this dualism is both thoroughgoing and all-pervading. It takes innumerable forms and meets one at every turn. The fundamental dualism of the Supernatural world and Nature controls a multitude

of others. There is the dualism of the Creator and His Creation; of God and the world; of God and Man; of the Divine and the Human nature; of the Church and the World; of the Church and the State; of the true Church and all other Churches; of sacred and profane (whether in time or in place); of the priest and the layman; of grace and nature; of soul and body; of man as the friend and as the enemy of God; of venial sin and mortal sin; of truth and error; of orthodoxy and heresy; of justification and reprobation; of salvation and perdition; of heaven and hell. And in every case the gulf of separation is complete. The erosive action of the adverb "not" is irresistible. Wherever there is a major antithesis in which the Church happens to be interested, and between the opposite terms of which there is, in the order of Nature, continuous gradation, the intervening grades are all eaten away by the word "not", and the opposite terms, the extreme ends of the process, alone remain. The substitution of the logical Law of Contradiction for Nature's own law (the Law of Correlated Opposition), which is common in everyday speech but is seldom taken seriously except when men are over-excited in argument, has been taken quite seriously by the Church of Rome, has in fact been adopted by the Church as the very pivot of her whole scheme of doctrine and system of thought.

Thus the Church owes it to Aristotle that she is firmly entrenched in a dualistic philosophy. But she has another debt to him which is even weightier than this. She owes it to him that she is firmly entrenched in her own orthodoxy. The Aristotelian confusion between propositions and judgments, the criticism of

which by Dr. Schiller was quoted in the first chapter of this book, has been of inestimable service to her. For it has enabled her to translate doctrine into *dogma*. In other words, it has authorized her to assume that she is competent to define in words the truth of things, even in the most abstruse and inscrutable of great matters; and to assume further, that the formulas in which she has set forth her definitions are absolutely true, true in themselves, true for all minds, unalterably true through all the ages.

Aristotle might not have countenanced those assumptions; but for the Church, which believed herself to be divinely guided, they were a legitimate inference from his doctrine of the syllogism. If syllogistic reasoning is to be fully effective the propositions which it uses must be true in themselves; true, whatever those who framed them may have intended them to mean; true, whatever those who read them or listen to them may understand them to mean.

Fr. Clarke, S.J., in his treatise on *Logic*, says that if "there is the faintest variation in the sense in which we use our terms, our law [the Law of Contradiction] does not hold good". Could there be a more significant admission of the uselessness of that law, and of syllogistic logic in general, for the purposes of the theologian? For of all the words in human speech, those which rise to our lips when we are thinking largely or feeling deeply about spiritual things are the last to allow themselves to be tied down to one precise and clearly defined sense, in which there is not to be "the faintest variation" when the words are being used. It is because the words which mean most are the least definable and have the least stability of meaning,

that the Church includes in her claim to infallibility in matters of faith and morals the claim to determine what words really mean.<sup>1</sup> But words mean what they do mean, and their meanings vary from person to person as well as from context to context; and the attempt to imprison within the limits of formal definition the meanings of words which embody experience, stimulate thought and awake emotion is as futile as the attempt to control the movements of the winds.

Under the guidance of Aristotle the Church has been well content that the articles of her faith should have the status of mathematical or chemical formulas, and that the words in which they are set forth should have the status of mathematical or chemical symbols. But the whole diameter of universal being separates the spheres of mathematics and chemistry, which are ever seeking what is ultimate in *analysis*, from the sphere of religious belief, which aims at union with what is ultimate in *synthesis*—the All which is One.

So far as the Church owes to Aristotle her dualism and her dogmatism, she has to thank him for two fatal gifts. For though dualism in thinking and dog-

<sup>1</sup> In the Jansenist controversy with Rome the Jansenists protested that what they said had been misunderstood. The Pope disallowed this protest, saying to the Jansenists, in effect if not in so many words: "What you said means so and so. This is my decision: and as such it defines the meaning of your words. What you meant to say matters nothing. What you did say has the meaning which I read into it, and in respect of which I condemn it." "If the Church", says Fr. Hunter, "could not determine the meaning of language she would be powerless to teach; her only medium of instruction is human language." This is quite true; but unfortunately you do not determine the *meaning* of a live word by formally defining it.



matism in teaching may give stability and rigidity to the structure of the Church as an organized institution, and so make her strong for the time being,—especially in an age of violent upheaval and swift transition and general uncertainty and insecurity, like that through which we are now passing—they unfit her for taking an active part in the reconstruction of belief and conduct on a broader and freer basis than that which has hitherto sufficed for them. The Church can do nothing for the world in the present crisis but call it back into her own fold. And to call it back into her own fold is to call it back into her own past. To be firmly entrenched in a philosophy or a theology—so firmly entrenched that dissent from it counts as heresy and therefore as mortal sin—is to be imprisoned in it; and that is the fate which, unhappily for the world, has befallen the most powerful and most highly organized of all religious bodies.

To criticize in detail the teaching of the Church of Rome is beside my purpose. Supernaturalism is, from its own point of view, immune from criticism by human reason. The Church's definition of faith<sup>1</sup> provides her with a safe shelter to which she can always retire at will. But I can say without hesitation—so deeply-rooted and so all-pervading is the "false dichotomy" of her philosophy—that there is not a single doctrine in the whole range of her teaching

<sup>1</sup> "Faith", says the Vatican Council, "is a supernatural virtue through which, by the influence and with the aid of the grace of God, we believe that the things which He has revealed are true, not because of their intrinsic truth seen by natural light, but on the authority of God Himself, who has given the revelation, who cannot be deceived nor deceive."

which will bear examination by the mind which has freed itself from bondage to the fundamental dualism of Nature and the Supernatural, and holds itself free to judge things by the light of its own intuitional reason. And I say further that the philosophy which on principle denies the unity of the universe and carries its denial downward from the very fountain-head of being into every detail of thought and conduct, is so manifestly refuted by the whole course of Nature and the whole trend of experience, that it does not call for serious disproof.

## CHAPTER V

### ARISTOTLE AND MODERN THOUGHT

THERE were two lines of descent from Aristotle into mediaeval and modern thought. In the first, the influence of Aristotle, the word-bound logician and the dualistic metaphysician, passed, mainly through the medium of Aquinas, into the heart of mediaeval Christendom, and found a resting place in the dualism and dogmatism of the Catholic Church. In the second, the influence of Aristotle, the physicist and the sense-bound cosmologist, found a resting place in the heroic materialism of the Stoics; and when Stoicism died out as a philosophy and a creed, it seemed to have passed away. But Stoicism embodied a conception of life which has in it elements of permanence; through its influence on character and conduct it outlived its death as a system of thought; and its spirit was ready to revive whenever the times were favourable. The opportunity for its revival came in the latter half of the Eighteenth Century. The rebirth of physical science which followed the downfall of Scholasticism had prepared the way for it; and the reaction of rationalism, led by Voltaire, Hume and others, against the dogmatism of the Christian Churches and against supernaturalism generally, opened up a channel for it, in which it has moved ever since—at first slowly and tentatively, then more freely and

openly, till it reached its maximum of influence and (in certain quarters) of ascendancy towards the end of the last century.

It will be remembered that Aristotle "regarded sense-perception proper, freed from any admixture of association or interpretation, as infallible", and the world which sense-perception reveals to us—the physical world, the world of generation and change, the world of matter and form—as intrinsically real. Intrinsically real (in the sense of being in itself what it seems to be) and—as a whole—eternal; yet not so real that it can fully and finally explain itself. He therefore added to it a second world which was in some sort explanatory of the first,—the world of the Prime Mover, the Intelligences and the Active Reason, a world of changeless reality, a world of Pure Form. It will also be remembered that Aristotle regarded man, *quâ* body and soul, as an indivisible whole and as an integral part of the world of matter and form; the Active Reason which was added to each individual man during his sojourn on earth being separable from him and returning to its own intrinsic purity, to what it is in itself, when he dies.

It will further be remembered that the Stoics regarded Aristotle's second world as superfluous, that they thought of the sensible world as well able to explain itself, inasmuch as it could absorb into itself all those higher manifestations and experiences which we speak of as spiritual; and that they therefore regarded the sensible world—*Nature*, as they called it—as the whole world, as both One and All. And their psychology was in keeping with their cosmology. Man, *quâ* body and soul, was, as in Aristotle's cosmo-

logy, both an indivisible whole and an integral part of the physical world; but they ruled out as superfluous the doctrine of the Active Reason, of a higher reality coming into man from without and withdrawing itself from him when he died. Man, as an integral part of Nature, was for them self-explanatory and self-sufficient.

What ancient Stoicism did to Aristotle's dualistic philosophy modern Stoicism has done, or tried to do, to the dualistic philosophy of orthodox Christianity. As a rival to Christianity Stoicism failed, as we have seen, chiefly because, in its passion for unification, it denied the immortality of the individual soul. In the philosophy of the Church, as in that of Aristotle and the Stoics, the physical world is accepted at its face value. The validity of sense-perception is unquestioned. The world of matter and form is regarded as intrinsically real. But it is real, not in its own right, but because the Supernatural God who created it endowed it with reality. But the Supernatural God also created, and is ever creating, the souls or spirits of men; and these are more real than the world into which they are born, in that they are immortal. Like the created world, they have had a beginning in time; but, unlike the created world, which will some day pass away, they go on for ever.

Modern Stoicism, in denying the Supernatural world, affirms the unity, the absolute reality and the self-sufficiency of Nature. And by Nature it means as a rule, the physical world. It does not necessarily do so. So far as it is genuinely agnostic it refrains from committing itself to a strictly materialistic conception of the universe. But the majority of modern Stoics

are materialists (in the metaphysical sense of the word) at heart. And the agnosticism of the minority has in many cases, at least on certain points, a distinctly materialistic bias. But, so far as modern Stoicism is materialistic, it is at a disadvantage, as compared with its prototype, in respect of its contemplative and quasi-emotional attitude towards "Nature". The ancient Stoics knew so little about the physical world that they were able to invest it, in its totality, with a kind of halo of divinity, and make it an object of worship and loyalty and moral obligation. And they were the better able to do this because they had, as they believed, absorbed the spiritual side of Nature into the physical world, without seriously impairing its spirituality; or, rather, because they had persuaded themselves that in Nature, as they understood the word, spirit and matter were fused into an indivisible whole.

Modern Stoicism has no illusion on this point. It knows too much about the physical world, it has penetrated too deeply into its inner economy, to be able to spiritualize it, still less to invest it with any halo of divinity. It is true that the recent researches of Physical Science have carried it so far into the heart of things as to undermine, or begin to undermine, the materialistic foundation on which much of modern philosophy believes itself to be securely based. But when modern Stoicism was at the height of its ascendancy, towards the end of the last century, it was in the main a genuinely materialistic philosophy, and had no qualms as to the soundness of its foundations.

The truth is that the antidote to the dualism which divides the universe into two dissevered worlds is

not to be found in the mere denial of reality to one of the two worlds. If either world is cancelled, a shrunk and mutilated universe remains. The cancelled world clamours in some form or other,—as a haunting ghost, if not as a “master<sup>1</sup> presence”,—for recognition.<sup>1</sup> And the attempt to absorb either world into the other is bound to miscarry until the externalism, with its misdirection of the search for reality, which makes dualism in philosophy inevitable, has been recognized as fallacious and disowned. But that is a matter on which much remains to be said.

The Stoics of antiquity, in denying the inherent reality of the soul or self, in spite of the silent protest of its self-awareness, denied by implication the reality of the spiritual side of Nature. That their passion for unification had behind it a narrow and inadequate conception of the universe, is proved by the failure of their materialistic “monism” to compete with the frankly dualistic philosophy of Christianity.

Modern Stoicism, when it reached its apogee, gave us a conception of the universe which had but to be stated in plain terms to be rejected as unworthy of serious consideration. An eminent living physicist<sup>2</sup> has set forth that conception in the following words:

“Thirty years ago, we thought, or assumed, that we were heading towards an ultimate reality of a mechanical kind. It seemed to consist of a fortuitous jumble of atoms which was destined to perform meaningless

<sup>1</sup> To divide mankind into good men and bad men is absurd. But you do not mend matters by saying pessimistically, that all men are bad, or, optimistically, that all men are good. It is nearer the truth to say that all men are, in widely varying degrees, good *and* bad.

<sup>2</sup> Sir James Jeans.

dances for a time under the action of blind purposeless forces and then fall back to form a dead world. Into this wholly mechanical world, through the play of the same blind forces, life had stumbled by accident. One tiny corner at least, and possibly several tiny corners of this universe of atoms, had chanced to become conscious for a time, but was destined in the end, still under the action of blind mechanical forces, to be frozen out and again leave a lifeless world."

Such was the conception of ultimate reality to which the Aristotelian belief in the infallibility of sense-perception was leading modern thought, in the course of its revolt against supernaturalistic dualism, when the ultimate reals, the atoms themselves, began to melt away, under the ruthless analysis of physical science, into—we know not what. Surely the crudest of dualisms would be preferable to such a hopelessly dismal would-be monism. Surely the most passive and helpless of created worlds would be preferable to a self-existent universe, so miserably meaningless, so pitifully shrunken.

I have incidentally touched on the problem of personal immortality. I will now consider the problem for its own sake, and try to show, by reference to it, how potent—and potent for evil—is Aristotle's influence in the world in which I am living to-day. Of all the problems that confront us when we are trying to understand life and map out a path through it, the problem of immortality is the most important,—and the most deliberately and persistently ignored. On our solution of it—be the solution one of belief or denial or agnostic indifference—depend our preliminary conceptions of the range and general character of the



universe and our preliminary conceptions of the destiny and the duty of man. In other words, the problem commands the main approaches to the whole field of experience which it is the business of speculative thought to explore. That being so, it is unwise, to say the least, to ignore it; and I, for one, can no longer allow myself to evade its challenge.

We may, I think, divide persons, in respect of their attitude towards this problem, into five classes. When I say this I am thinking of the persons whom I meet, and of the books, written by contemporary authors, which I read. To the *first* class belong those who hold the belief in immortality which is authoritatively taught by most of the Churches—Christian or Islamic—in the West and the Near East. To the *second* class belong those who actively disbelieve in personal immortality. To the *third*, those whose attitude towards the problem is, nominally at least, agnostic. To the *fourth*, those whose attitude is one of sheer indifference; who are wholly immersed, and content to remain immersed, in what they call the affairs of this world. To the *fifth*, those who have studied the positive evidence for personal survival and are convinced by it.

### (1) *The Orthodox Belief*

The members of this class who take the eschatology of their respective Churches quite seriously, are committed thereby to belief in the most cruel, unjust and irrational of all dualisms—that of an eternity of happiness in heaven, with, as the only alternative to this, an eternity of torment in hell.<sup>1</sup> In that doctrine

<sup>1</sup> I do not forget that in the eschatology of the Church of Rome there figures—most reasonably, though quite illogically,

the Aristotelian Law of Contradiction has borne its deadliest fruit; and, in doing so, has reduced itself to an absurdity, and exposed the hollowness of the foundation on which the dualistic structure of Western religion and philosophy ultimately rests. For how long will men be content to believe that this one life on earth is their only period of probation, the only period in which it is possible for them, by the conduct of life, to make or mar themselves; that once they have entered heaven or hell, they remain there—in a changeless *state* of being—for all eternity; that just to escape perdition is to qualify for the enjoyment, for ever and ever, of the bliss of heaven; that just to fall short of salvation is to be doomed, for ever and ever, to the misery of hell; that an evil and misspent life can be atoned for, in the last hour of it, either by the efficacy of the Sacrament of Penance, or by faith in “the finished work of the Redeemer”; that one who has lived a righteous life, but, yielding to a sudden temptation, falls into mortal sin, and (through an accident)<sup>1</sup> dies unshriven, is a “lost soul” and goes straight to hell?

—an intermediate state which is known as Purgatory. But Purgatory is not really an intermediate state. It does not even begin to bridge the gulf between heaven and hell. It is merely the anteroom of heaven. He who enters it will pass on from it, sooner or later, into heaven; he will never descend from it into hell. And his sojourn in it will be limited in time. In Eternity, and through all Eternity, the dualism of heaven and hell, in all its cruelty and injustice, holds good.

<sup>1</sup> Fr. Hunter, S.J., in his *Outlines of Dogmatic Theology*, can even contemplate the possibility of “a sinner dying in his sin”, because a “priest who was on his way to reconcile him to God” was “hindered by a flood from arriving in time”!

For how long will the Churches of the West be able, by force of authority, to maintain the orthodox eschatology in the face of its ever growing condemnation by the mind and the heart of man? Not for very long, I predict. The Churches that refuse to liberalize their teaching on that, if on no other point, are working, slowly perhaps but surely, for their own decline and fall. For the progressive widening of the horizon of knowledge and experience is making for the growth of the human spirit; and no force is so destructive of what represses or otherwise obstructs it as the force of growing and expanding life.

Here at least, then, there is urgent need for a freer, a more subtle, a more adaptable, a less rigid and uncompromising logic than that which Aristotle bequeathed to Christendom. There must be something seriously wrong with the logic which could, for example, enable Aquinas to reason himself into the belief that the sight of the torments of the damned in hell added to the happiness of the saved in heaven.

## (2) *Disbelief*

Here the Aristotelian tradition makes its influence felt along another line of descent. At the root of the point-blank denial of immortality lies the assumption that sense-perception is infallible; that the world which sense-perception reveals to us is not merely a real world, but is *the* real world, the whole world, the "All of Being".<sup>\*</sup> It is the utter impossibility of

<sup>\*</sup> Aristotle himself did not go so far as this; but the Stoics had done so for him; and when the reaction against supernaturalism came in the Eighteenth Century, there was no place left either in philosophical or popular thought for his world of Pure Form.

*visualizing* (in any sense of the word) any other order of things than that which we look out upon, which makes the average sense-bound man incapable, physically incapable, one might almost say, of believing in a future life. How actively inhibitive is the belief in the infallibility of sense-perception I know from my own experience. It was not till middle life that I convinced myself of the genuineness of what are called "psychic" experiences. Then a new world opened before me. Till then I had combined a high-flown quasi-mystical idealism with a virtual disbelief in survival. My "next world" was at best a kind of metaphysical dreamland, not a world of natural activity and life. The world which was familiar to all of us seemed to fill all space, so far as space admitted of being filled, and to promise continuance (whether as a living or a dead world) through all time. Where, then, could a place be found, either in space or time, for the carrying on of life beyond the grave? If this was the frame of mind of an ardent idealist, what wonder that those whose philosophy was either instinctively or consciously materialistic turned away from the belief in those days; what wonder that those who think with them still turn away from it, as from the idlest of dreams?

### (3) *Agnosticism*

As far as my experience goes those who call themselves agnostics waver for the most part between denial and indifference, but are on the whole inclined to the former, though they may not care to commit themselves to it without some reservation of opinion. The refusal to examine the evidence for survival, which is characteristic of most of them, including

many who profess to have an open mind, must, I think, be regarded as virtually equivalent to denial. But there is one class of agnostics whose attitude calls for special consideration. I know many men—intellectuals for the most part—who, on the one hand, though they themselves repudiate the orthodox doctrine of external rewards and punishments in a future life, are too ready to assume that all who believe in and desire immortality are influenced by the corresponding hopes and fears; and who, on the other hand, are still in the Aristotelian tradition, as amended by the Stoics, sharing in the devotion of the latter to "Nature" and the Commonwealth of Mankind. These men turn away from the problem of immortality because they seem to think that it is unworthy of a good citizen of the world to allow his conduct to be affected by any but purely mundane considerations; and that to live on after death in one's influence on others is a higher kind of immortality and a worthier object of desire than to live on—even on a higher plane of being and on an ever expanding scale of action—in one's own person, in other worlds. I cannot think that in this particular attitude of agnostic indifference to the next world there is implicit any effective argument against immortality. But there are quarters in which the argument, if such it be, seems to carry weight. I will presently return to it, and ask what substitutes for it the desire for immortality, *as the natural continuation of life on earth*, is able to offer.

#### (4) *Indifference*

That this is widely spread is due partly to a reaction against the injustice and irrationality of the orthodox

eschatology; partly to the general secularization of life which has resulted from the failure of the teaching of the Churches to satisfy the expanding consciousness and harmonize with the expanding experiences of mankind; partly because any active interest which one might take in the problem of immortality would almost certainly be discountenanced alike by religious orthodoxy, highbrow intellectualism, and robust common sense. Warned off from inquiry into the most vitally important of all matters, by official authority on the one side and herd-disapproval on the other, it is but natural that men should concentrate their attention on the affairs of this life and this world, and avert their eyes from the possibilities that await them beyond the grave.

#### (5) *Belief in Natural Immortality*

Yet there are persons—and the number is growing from day to day—who have studied the positive evidence for personal survival and convinced themselves that it is conclusive. It is true that they are still a somewhat despised minority and that many of them still speak with bated breath. Why is this? I have just given (by implication) a hasty answer to this question. I will now go into it more fully. Twelve years ago, when I told the story of my inner life,<sup>1</sup> looking back to the time (the last decade of the last century) when I first became interested in "psychism", I asked myself why there was then such intense hostility to psychism in general, and in particular to any attempts that men were making to solve the riddle of the grave. I gave the following reasons for the

<sup>1</sup> *In Quest of an Ideal*, by Edmond Holmes.

prevalence of that spirit; and I think they are worth repeating to-day:

"The dogmatic materialist hates psychism because he sees that, if there is a single atom of truth in it his whole system of thought will crumble into dust. It is notoriously difficult to prove a negative; and this he has undertaken to do.

"The metaphysician, of whatever school, hates it because it tells him that there are organs of cognition other than those on which he has been content to rely, and that there are whole orders of things, whole planes of being, which have never come within the compass of his speculative thought.

"The man of science hates it because it seems to say 'No' to two assumptions which a quasi-professional bias has led him to make—that the sphere of his labours, the physical world, is the all of being, and that analysis of physical phenomena is the only pathway to reality.

"The orthodox Christian hates it because, so far as it countenances the belief in immortality, it finds a natural, not a supernatural basis for it, and because the picture which it gives him of after death conditions is incompatible with what he has been authoritatively taught.

"And the plain, average, common-sensical man hates it because he feels that, if he has any commerce with it, his reputation for sanity, for respectability, for 'strict attention to business', will be fatally compromised.

"Behind these divers reasons for anti-psychic prejudice there are two influences which are at work in all of us, affecting us in various ways and degrees. The first is the anthropocentric instinct, the tendency to assume that things as they really are reveal themselves to man as he actually is—in other words, that

the world is in itself whatever the man in the street and the man of science, working in collaboration, affirm it to be. The second anti-psychic influence is generated by the joint action of two tendencies from which no one is wholly exempt, and which readily merge in one—spiritual indolence and self-love. There is nothing a man hates so much as to be compelled to reconsider his outlook on life, with the prospect of having to quit the well-worn grooves in which he has moved, smoothly and happily, for many years. To tell a man that his ways of thinking and acting need to be revised is to offer a dire affront to his self-love. To tell him that he ought, at whatever cost, to set to work at revising them is to make a call upon his energy and enterprise, to which he will be extremely reluctant to respond. Whatever ground has been won by Humanity, from the days of the first man who sharpened flints to the days of Lister and Pasteur, has been won in the teeth of the blind, bitter, unreasoning opposition which the Philistines of the day, the champions of custom, convention, tradition and routine, offered to the children of light. Jerusalem is not the only city which has stoned its prophets. The desire to silence and persecute the reformer and the innovator is strong in every unregenerate heart. Can we wonder, then, that when man is called upon, as he is by the revelations of psychism, to reconsider his whole outlook on life, to reconstruct his whole theory of things, to scrap or at least remould his beliefs, his convictions, his habits of mind, his rules of conduct, to provide himself with new ideals, new postulates, new stand-points, new principles,—his first impulse is to denounce the too daring innovator as a revolutionary or a madman, to pour scorn and obloquy upon him, to shut him up in a lunatic asylum, to send him (if it is in his power to do so) to the rack and the stake?"



Does this list of reasons for anti-psychic prejudice need to be revised to-day? To some extent, I think, it does. The materialist, the metaphysician and the orthodox believer stand very much where they did forty years ago. But the man of science is less sure than he was then that his world is the whole world; for the boundaries of his world are ever receding as he tries to define them; and his own researches have undermined the foundations of his unformulated philosophy. And the plain average man is beginning to take more interest in psychism than he did when his attitude towards it was defined either by religious orthodoxy, which was much more authoritative then than it is now; or by the "realism" which he had inherited through the Stoics from Aristotle; or by an alliance between the two which was more common and more firmly cemented in those days than it is to-day. And those changes have affected the partnership which I spoke of between the man of science and the man in the street. The anthropocentric instinct is changing its direction and its range; a changing conception of man and a changing conception of the world are acting and reacting on each other; and men are less sure to-day of what the world is in itself, one reason for this being that they are less sure of what man is in himself.

But what I said about the revolutionary influence of the revelations of psychism and the revolutionary demands which the belief in immortality as the natural continuation of life makes upon us, is as true to-day as when I wrote it. Indeed, if I rewrote the passage to-day I would express myself more strongly than I did then. It is because the demands which the belief

makes upon us are so revolutionary and so far-reaching, that it is incumbent upon us to-day to realize their ever growing insistence, to face the problem of immortality unflinchingly, and, if the evidence for personal survival convinces us, to prepare to reconsider our whole outlook on life.

That our present outlook is unsatisfactory, that false ideals are producing a defective sense of values, which takes a thousand forms and gives rise to untold confusion and misery, will, I think, be generally admitted. I need not go into details. The whole wide world is sick and sorry; and its mistakes and follies and troubles cry to heaven. But if we are to mend our ways, we must mend our more immediate aims. If we are to mend our more immediate aims we must change our standards of value. If we are to change our standards of value we must transform our ideals, and with them our remoter aims. If we are to transform our ideals we must learn to distinguish reality from illusion; or rather—to speak antithetically instead of dualistically—to distinguish higher from lower realities. It is to this apparently insoluble problem that we come back at last. And we must not allow ourselves to stop short of it. A half-hearted solution of any philosophical problem is no solution. If we are to get anywhere we must try to get to bed-rock.

At a recent Joint Session of the Aristotelian Society and the Mind Association, Professor Macmurray read a paper in which he tried to answer the question, What is Philosophy? "Briefly," says Professor Joad in the *Observer*, "his answer is as follows. Reality has two aspects, its aspect as fact, it is a fact that some-

thing exists, and its aspect as value, the something has value, it is good or bad, beautiful or ugly." Here I must break off abruptly in my transcription of Professor Joad's synopsis of his brother Professor's paper. It is useless for me to follow him further until I know what he and Professor Macmurray mean by the word "fact". "It is a fact that something exists." Yes; but what is the criterion of existence? Are the objects of normal sense-perception (actual or potential) the only concrete things that exist? If not, where are we to draw the line? An apparition which haunts a house or a road is seen by not more than one person in a hundred, but presents the same appearance to all who see it. Does it exist? Is it real? Is it fact? If not, why not? Do the objects of mystical experience, of clairvoyant or clairaudient sense-perception, of prophetic vision, of telepathic experience, of spiritualistic communication, of occultist knowledge,—do these and the like of these exist? Do they or do they not? Are the accounts which we receive of them worth investigating, or are we to dismiss them off-hand as incredible? In fine, are we going to admit or rule out the *supernormal*?

It is useless for us to try to burke this question. Its challenge meets us at every turn. Before one can attempt to interpret the universe one must come to some sort of an understanding with oneself as to what one means, in general terms, by the universe; one must form a preliminary conception of its range and its leading features. But, in forming such a conception, one must beware of imposing arbitrary limits on the field of experience which one is about to explore, a field which is presumably all-embracing. To do so is to disqualify

oneself at the outset for the task which one has undertaken. It follows that the philosophy which ignores the supernormal, equally with the philosophy which rules out the supernormal on *a priori* grounds, dooms itself to perpetual sterility; and that the philosophy which confounds the supernormal with the supernatural does the same. It is between these philosophies, between Normalism<sup>1</sup> and Supernaturalism, that the speculative thought of the West is, in large measure, divided to-day. And, as it happens, both of them trace their descent from Aristotle: the former from his "realism", from his belief in the infallibility of sense-perception; here the line of descent is through the Stoics: the dualism of the latter, which is its most characteristic feature, from his dualistic logic; here the line of descent is through the Schoolmen and the Church.

Modern philosophy of the Normalist type takes refuge from the hardness and narrowness of its "facts" in what it calls "values". The values of things—what they are worth to us—are determined by the estimates that we form of them; and these again depend on their subservience to our larger and more spiritual aims, or—in a word—to our *ideals*. The supreme ideal—that which controls all others and determines all our standards of value—is that of achieving one's own spiritual perfection, of growing to the full measure of one's spiritual stature. It is obvious that we cannot

<sup>1</sup> By Normalism I mean the philosophy which tries to solve the riddle of existence within the limits of the normal man's normality; in other words, whose interpretation of the universe is the outcome of collaboration between the man of science and the man in the street (see p. 93).

go far towards defining this ideal until we have at least tried to answer two vital questions: Are our spiritual potentialities limited or—as far as we can see—limitless? Is the time provided for the realization of our spiritual potentialities limited, or—as far as we can see—limitless? If we answer the former question without taking into account the revelations of psychism as to the existence of powers and senses which are alive and active in some men and may well be latent in all, we are leaving it, in effect, unanswered. And if we answer the latter question without taking into account the revelations of psychism as to the continuance of personal life beyond the grave, we are leaving it, in effect, unanswered. The two questions are closely connected. We have seen that Neo-Stoicism turns away from the problem of immortality as unworthy of consideration by a loyal "Citizen of the World". We can now see that this attitude, with its implicit condemnation of the desire for immortality as selfish, involves a profound underestimate of the range of "the World", and a profound misunderstanding of the duties of its "Citizens". The desire for immortality is so far from being intrinsically selfish that if we get down to its bedrock we find that it is the very negation of selfishness,—that it is a desire for the expansion of life, and the transcendence of self, and that underlying it is the secret conviction that for the realization of man's vast possibilities many lives are needed and many worlds.

On the whole, then, I cannot but think that if an adequate and coherent system of philosophy is to be built on a naturalistic foundation, we must cease to be content with facts as facts and with values as values.

We must look behind facts for their basis of reality, and behind values for their basis of ideality. In other words, we must come to an understanding with ourselves as to the authenticity and significance of the revelations of psychism. And that, as long as we are in the Aristotelian tradition, whether logical or cosmological, we cannot hope to do.

How long shall we be content to waver between Normalism and Supernaturalism, finding rest in neither philosophy, but being warned off by each in turn from the *higher Naturalism*, which is waiting, when its time comes, to give us guidance and light? When will its time come? Can we hope to find permanent rest in either of the dominant philosophies? Are their demands on us worthy of what we feel to be best in ourselves?

What does Supernaturalism set before me as my highest aim in life? To be "saved". To escape damnation. Just to escape it; for no more than that is needed. To buy salvation in the cheapest market. To be saved at a minimum of spiritual exertion. To be saved by mechanical obedience to authoritative direction, which will be rewarded with periodical doles of supernatural grace. How inimical dualism is to idealism, how inevitably it makes for the usurpation by the minimum of the throne of the ideal, the exponents of Catholic theology take pains to make clear to us. Fr. Hunter, for example, in his *Outlines of Dogmatic Theology*, tells us that the command Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul and with all thy strength "is fully satisfied when the judgment places God above His creatures"; and though, in the scheme of life which his Church

prescribes, ceremonial observances play a prominent and essential part, he is careful to tell us that "apart from cases of special urgency, it seems that the Divine precept [to communicate] cannot be held to require greater frequency than the annual reception which the Church has commanded. He who faithfully fulfils his Easter duties does all he is bound to do in this matter". *All he is bound to do.* And what is the least that he is bound to do? What is the least that will ensure his salvation? This is the question which the layman naturally asks, and which Catholic theology answers in some detail. If an eternity of torment in hell is the only alternative to an eternity of bliss in heaven, the Church must, in her own interest, throw open the gates of heaven as wide as possible, as wide at least as is compatible with hell remaining a grim reality. And so, for most of her children, the minimum takes the place of the ideal, and safety takes the place of perfection as the object of desire and effort. But in truth there is no safety, in the final sense of the word, except in perfection.<sup>1</sup>

And what does Normalism set before me as my highest aim in life? "Service to others under the guidance of science" is, I believe, the orthodox answer to this question. But service is always directed towards an end. To what end for others is my service to them to direct itself? Normalism knows of no higher end for others, as for myself, than that of service to others.

<sup>1</sup> I do not forget that I am a Christian, and that both by example and precept Christ has ever called upon us to forget the minimum and aspire to the ideal. But my point is that the official creeds of Christendom and Islam are constrained by the dualistic trend of their philosophy to define the minimum and in doing so to give it the status and authority of an ideal.

And so its thought, imprisoned within the limits of the normal man's normality, goes round and round in an endless circle, idealizing, as an end itself, what it does not pretend to be more than the means to an unknown end,—an end which it does not seek to define, for the reason that it is content to regard the means to it as an end in itself. It tells me, when I ask for instructions, that the way to live wisely and well is to live for the service of others. And it tells me, when I ask for further instructions, that the best way to serve others is to help them to live wisely and well.

What way of escape is there from this circle? None that Normalism can offer. None, except into the limitlessness of human nature and of the stage on which human nature plays its part. The being of man, as of every living thing, comes under the master law of growth; and the highest end at which a man can aim is that of realizing his own potentialities, of becoming what he has it in him to be. And who will presume to assign limits to that process? Are not all the indications of what is supernormal in human nature and human life to be welcomed and followed up? Do we not "feel that we are greater than we know"? And may we not trust that feeling so far at least as to examine impartially whatever experiences bear it out. The weakness of Normalism, as a scheme of life, is that it limits its outlook on human nature to the normal man's normal life on earth. As regards what is beyond that horizon it is at best deliberately agnostic. If it does not deny, it ignores the higher powers and senses with which some of us are undeniably endowed and which may be waiting for development in all of us. And if it does not deny, it



ignores the continuation of life beyond death, the positive evidence for which is accumulating from day to day. No wonder that our thought about life moves round and round in a hopeless circle, when the dominant philosophy has deliberately caged it and clipped its wings. And no wonder that we are uncertain of our goings when the leaders to whom we look for guidance have deliberately bandaged their own eyes.

It is the confluence of the supernaturalistic externalism of the Jews with the intellectualistic externalism of the Greeks which has brought us to our present pass,—first by establishing its own ascendancy in the West, and then by provoking a reaction against itself, in which Greek intellectualism, divorced from the supernatural, has played the leading part. What made the confluence possible was the fact that both the philosophies were externalist, that both sought for ultimate reality outside the seeker, that there was no return in either of them to the percipient and cognitive self. Externalism leads straight to dualism; and in an externalist philosophy there is no escape from dualism except through the mutilation of the universe, the cancellation of one of the two dissevered worlds. The philosophy of the Catholic and other Christian Churches, at once obedient to the logic of Aristotle and responsive to the influence of popular thought, is frankly dualistic. The philosophy of the Stoics, ancient and modern, inheritors of Aristotle's sense-bound cosmology, is monistic, but only in the sense that it

"averts its eyes  
From half of human fate,"

or, to be more exact, that the abyss of separation which

is of the essence of a dualism remains in it, but with a mechanicalized world on one side of it and a world of ghosts on the other.

Neither of the current philosophies can in any degree help me to understand the universe; and it is with that end in view that I have studied them. The stream of tendency in thought and emotion and conduct which once flowed in a single river-bed, but has since bifurcated into the channels of Supernaturalism and Normalism, has in large measure run its course and done its work. That it had a work to do, that it was a necessary stage in the development of the human spirit, is quite compatible with the fact that it now bids fair to end in failure and disaster.

For my own part, I must turn elsewhere for guidance.



*PART II*

WITHIN



## CHAPTER I

### INTUITIONAL REASONING

A PHILOSOPHER'S way of thinking both reflects and determines the general tenor of his philosophic thought. A dualistic way of thinking, for example, reflects a dualistic conception of the universe and leads to the formulation of such a conception, and even to the elaboration of it, as in Roman Catholic theology, into a complete system of thought. It is the same, though not quite the same, with the Neo-Stoical or Normalist philosophy. Here acceptance of sense-perception proper as (virtually) infallible determines the philosopher's way of thinking, and leads on to the formulation of a philosophy which postulates the intrinsic, and even (for some minds) the sole, reality of the physical world, and therefore does not aspire—so far as it is strictly metaphysical—to be more than a synthesis of the most comprehensive data of physical science, read in the light of its latest discoveries and advances. But though this naïve realism determines the realist's way of thinking when he is trying to understand the universe, and is therefore largely responsible for his general conclusions, it is no more than an unverified and unverifiable assumption and can scarcely be said to embody any logic or thought-out way of thinking. One therefore turns from it, in one's study of philosophic method,

to the ways of working which have been so successful in physical science, and asks oneself, as I shall presently do, what light those ways can throw on the methods of thinking by which one may hope to solve the master riddles of human thought.

Meanwhile, let us go back to the logic of Aristotle, the logic of the Law of Contradiction and the Syllogism. We have seen that there are two features of that logic which unfit it for use on the higher planes of thought. The first is that it uses words as if they were symbols which could be substituted at will for things; that it mistakes reasoning about words for reasoning, with mathematical conclusiveness, about things; that it thus resolves argument into verbal disputation, and the search for truth into a game of verbal fence;—a feature which is potent for evil in proportion as the words which are used, far from having the character of symbols, are undefinable, mobile, active and alive.

The second feature is that it is the logic of Yes or No; that it readily passes, especially when it is dealing with fluid words and abstract ideas, from *not-A* to the *opposite of A*; that, therefore, on principle it ignores gradation; that where Nature bids us range in thought between antithetical conceptions, mutually dependent even while diametrically opposed, it gives us our choice, once and for all, between mutually exclusive alternatives.

Let us see if we can find a more serviceable instrument of thought than this; a logic which will correct both its defects, beginning with the latter, and working back from it, if all goes well, to the former. Formal logic, under the lead of Aristotle, imposes certain laws

on the human mind, which the mind, as the logician contends, is bound to obey; and it calls these Laws of Thought. But the real Laws of Thought are something other than laws which, in our judgment, ought to regulate the processes of our thought. They are laws which *do* regulate them, or at least tend to regulate them, whether we are aware of their doing so or not, laws which have paramount authority over the processes of our thought, because they are the supreme laws which regulate the processes of Nature, both in ourselves and in the world around us. Now the master law of Being in general, and of our being in particular, is the Law of Becoming, the law of movement, of change, of growth, of evolution. How are we to bring our logic into conformity with this master law?

Let us take a concrete case, a case in which the mind ranges at will along a particular line of experience, and ask ourselves how we shall best deal with it in our thought. Let us take the case of *temperature*, *hot* or *cold*. If we are to find verbal expression for our experiences of temperature, we must depend in the main on two words—"hot" and "cold". It is true that there are a few subsidiary words such as *warm*, *lukewarm*, *temperate*, *chilly*, and a few associated adverbs and phrases, which help us to express our experiences of gradation in temperature; but so far as we rely on these, we are expressing ourselves loosely, inaccurately and uncertainly; and they are of no use for the scientific investigation of heat.

What can the Aristotelian logic, the logic of Being, do for us? According to the Law of Contradiction the same temperature cannot be both cold and not cold, or hot and not hot. And, according to the Law of



Excluded Middle, the same temperature must be either cold or not cold, or hot or not hot. These statements tell us nothing. They do not regulate our thought, for there is no thought for them to regulate. So futile and meaningless are they that we instinctively break away from them and substitute for "not hot" *cold* and for "not cold" *hot*. Then we can at least, at whatever sacrifice of logic, talk to one another about the prevailing temperature (let us say) with some chance of being understood. But so long as we limit ourselves to words we cannot do much more than this.

Let us try to go more closely into the meanings of the words *hot* and *cold*.

According to the logic of the Schools, as interpreted by the logic of the people, heat and cold are *alternatives*, mutually exclusive ideas. In reality they are *correlated opposites*, each of which implies the other, has its meaning in and through its opposition to the other, and would become meaningless if the other could be suddenly cancelled. In other words, they are mutually dependent, not mutually exclusive. They stand for the opposite poles or extremes of a particular line of experience, which, as consciously realized by us, becomes a particular line of thought. But the opposites, far from dividing their own world or aspect of things between them, may be said to co-operate, through their very opposition to one another, to give that world its unity and totality.

And they are as inseparable, within the range of our experience, as they are antagonistic to one another. Apart from the absolute cold of the physicist, which is a limit to our sense-experience but not to our imaginative thought, there is no degree of temperature

to which both terms are not (ideally) applicable. Freezing point, for example, is very warm as compared with absolute cold; and boiling point is bitterly cold as compared with the temperature in the interior of the sun. Each of the terms, in turn, far from having a limited range of its own, follows its opposite indefinitely in the direction of that opposite's own extreme.

To say that everything is either hot or cold would therefore be a glaring misuse of language. It would be nearer the truth to say that everything is both hot and cold, relatively hot and relatively cold. But this again tells us nothing, or, at best, very little. What we want to know is how near to either extreme is this or that object. Is it preponderatingly hot or preponderatingly cold? What we want to know, above everything, is what is the exact degree of temperature of the object in question. And this we can ascertain.

How, then, are we to make the line of experience which we speak of as "heat and cold" yield up its secrets? Not by thinking, logically, about heat and non-heat, or about cold and non-cold, as mutually exclusive alternatives. Not by thinking, illogically, about heat and cold as mutually exclusive alternatives. *But by measuring gradation in the process which ranges between the ideal opposites of heat and cold.* This we have been able to do; and, thanks to the advance of mathematical science, and to the ever increasing perfection of our scientific instruments, we are able to go on measuring gradation in temperature, over a progressively wider range and with a progressively higher degree of accuracy.

This example is typical. We learn from it what are the right and the wrong ways of thinking about the processes of Nature. It is by turning its back on the (so-called) Laws of Thought, and the *a priori* reasoning associated with them, with its inevitable confusion between words and symbols, and between words and things; it is by turning its back on the wisdom of the Schoolmen and substituting for it direct experience, whether observational or experimental, and the exact measurement of gradation,—that Physical Science has made the marvellous progress which has been the chief achievement of human thought during the past 400 years. And this way of thinking about the processes of Physical Nature may be expected to hold good when we pass beyond the limits of Physical Nature—illimitable in one sense, but not in another—into a world in which the quantitative measurement of gradation is impossible. For then the *qualitative* measurement will take its place as a method to be followed, or at least as an ideal to be aimed at; and if it can be achieved it will lead us, we may surely conjecture, in the direction of ideal truth. But can it be achieved? When weights and measures, and telescopes and microscopes, and mathematical calculuses and other means of exact measurement are no longer available, is there anything that can take their place?

Yes. There is something which was at work before calculuses and scientific instruments were invented; something without which calculuses and instruments can effect nothing; something which will go on working on higher and ever higher levels of being, where calculuses and instruments are of no avail. Let us see what that is, first considering cases in which the

quantitative measurement of gradation, though ideally possible, is impracticable.

I want to cross a road along which many vehicles are rushing at various rates of speed. I see an opening in the traffic. Can I take advantage of it? The nearest vehicle is so many yards away and is approaching at such and such a speed. The road is so many yards wide. At what pace must I cross it if I am to get to the other side in safety? The answer to this problem might, *ideally*, be worked out with mathematical precision; but there is no time for the necessary measurements to be taken or the consequent calculations to be made. But, with a glance up and down and across the road, I solve the problem in my mind, and I cross the road in safety. An *intuitional* faculty, a *sense* for distances and speeds, has been at work. Had it failed me, had it miscalculated the distances and speeds, in however slight a degree, or, if its data were correct, had it drawn a wrong conclusion from them, I might have been knocked down and severely or even fatally injured. But it made its measurements and calculations with perfect, or at least sufficient, accuracy, though the details were quite unknown to me, and it solved my problem to my satisfaction.

A similar sense, which has been developed by practice to a high degree of efficiency, is possessed by the driver who steers a bulky motor-bus through the intricacies of street traffic, avoiding collisions with no more than an inch to spare, taking advantage of openings to pass vehicles that are moving at a slower pace, and in general regulating his speed and altering his direction with perfect accuracy according to the demands of the ever changing features of the traffic.

Or, let us take the case of a skilled batsman who receives a tricky ball in a cricket match from a skilled bowler. What minute calculations he has to make in an instant of time! The problem which confronts him admits, ideally, of being treated mathematically and solved with mathematical precision. The place on the pitch at which he ought to meet the ball, the way in which he ought to stand, the angle at which he ought to hold his bat, the direction in which he ought to hit the ball, the force which he ought to put into the stroke, might all be worked out on paper. But in the tenth of a second his trained *sense* enables him to make the necessary calculations. If he makes them correctly he may send the ball to the boundary. If there is any error in them, however slight, he may be bowled or caught or stumped.

In every game, in every sport, in every craft, in every art similar calculations are being constantly made by appropriate senses which have been duly trained by practice. Man has a general capacity for developing special intuitional faculties in response to the demands of special environments. Will this capacity fail him when the quantitative measurement of gradation is neither actually nor ideally possible? I know of no reason why it should. The general intuitional capacity, the capacity for developing senses and sub-senses, is present in each of us. How far and in what directions it admits of being used varies from man to man, and how far it can be developed both in general and in its particular manifestations depends on the use that we make of it. The aesthetic sense, the literary sense, the moral sense, the social sense, the political sense, the religious sense, the sense for spiritual values, each of

these is present in embryo in each of us; and behind them all we have Cardinal Newman's "illative sense", which is largely intellectual, and the sense of reality, which, as it develops, becomes increasingly emotional. It is true that in their embryonic or quasi-embryonic states these senses vary greatly from man to man, the potentiality of future growth being strongly marked in some cases and almost non-existent in others. Yet they all admit of being fostered and trained, and of being starved and repressed.

In any and every case they do their work, in part at least, by measuring gradation, from which they pass on to determine direction and calculate proportion. In physical science the measurement of gradation is consciously made, and being ultimately mathematical and therefore admitting of being rigorously tested, is cold, impartial, impersonal, unemotional. But when quantitative measurement ceases to be possible, an emotional element enters into the intuitional measurement, largely, if not wholly, sub-conscious, which takes its place; personality begins to assert itself; the disinterested impartiality of the scientific observer is no longer to be looked for; and the test of truth, instead of being one which the mathematician can apply in his study, or the chemist in his laboratory, resolves itself into conformity to the growing and deepening experiences of mankind. The measurement of qualitative gradation is necessarily emotional, inasmuch as in it sensitivity, feeling its way, takes the place of conscious observation and calculation; and the higher the level of being the more predominately emotional is the intuition that apprehends and measures it. When I say "more

emotional" I mean not merely that the proportion of emotion is higher, but also that the quality of the emotion is of a higher order, that it is stronger, purer and more spiritual.

When the emotional element overwhelms the intellectual, and in doing so stimulates and strengthens it and makes it more efficient—like a flooding river, which as it passes through its wonted channel, widens and deepens it—we have what is commonly known as *genius*. Genius has been defined as an infinite capacity for taking pains; and there is some truth in that definition. But it would be nearer to truth to say that it is a spontaneous overflow of the intuitional faculty in response to the stimulus of a particular environment, from the hidden springs of the spirit.<sup>1</sup> For why does the man of genius take such pains with whatever he has in hand? Is it not because the demands of his intuition for clear vision and adequate expression are imperative and inexhaustible? What does it mean

<sup>1</sup> I am thinking for the moment of creative genius. But genius is not necessarily creative. It can manifest itself on other planes of human activity than those of poetry and art. There is the genius of the mechanical inventor, for example; and there is the genius of the master of this or that sport or game. Don Bradman, the young Australian cricketer, whose performances as a batsman have astonished all lovers of cricket, has been spoken of as a genius; and in his case the use of the word is, on his own showing, singularly appropriate. In an account of himself which he gave to an interviewer he said that he regarded every ball that he received as a problem to be solved while the ball was on its way to him. It is because, in solving those problems, his intuitional judgment worked as a rule successfully as well as with lightning speed, that his skill as a batsman may fairly be said to have risen to the level of genius.

when a poet spends hours and hours over a single stanza or even a single line in a poem which he is composing? What does it mean when a painter spends hours and hours over an apparently unimportant detail in a composition? Not that either artist is consciously trying to obey a formulated rule; but that each of them is trying to satisfy the demands of an intuitional judgment, which, as he knows to his cost, will give him no peace till its demands are satisfied.

Higher even than genius is the intuitional experience of the mystic, who has subconsciously measured and appraised the claims of the various claimants to intrinsic reality, and rejected them all in favour of the Reality which can neither be measured nor appraised; of the inward and spiritual Flame, real in its own right and known only to itself, of which his own and all other spirits are the irradiated light.

We see, then, that when weights and measures and arithmetic and all other branches of mathematics, and telescopes and microscopes and all other means of measuring quantitative gradation fail us, intuition comes to our aid and enables us to measure the qualitative gradations which are more subtle and more significant than any that the chemist or the physicist has measured and recorded.

What syllogistic reasoning is to the logic of Being, the logic which equips the mind for dealing with a static world, intuitional reasoning is to the logic of Becoming. Syllogistic reasoning has the Laws of Thought and all the other postulates of Formal Logic behind it, and takes their absolute validity for granted. In the logic of Becoming there are no laws of thought to which the mind is bound under pains and penalties



to conform. Intuitional reasoning goes its way, guided no doubt by laws of its own; but those laws cannot be formulated with finality and precision and cannot therefore be consciously obeyed. The idea of man being in bondage to his conscious interpretation of his own ways of thinking is wholly repugnant to the logic of Becoming. In every direction in which man develops himself his subconscious self is the pioneer, the leader in the great adventure of living; and the surest way for him to arrest his development is to lay down beforehand laws which he is in no circumstances to disregard or transgress. He is learning how to think; and if he is to fetter his freedom while he is still in the nursery, by strictly defining the limits within which the movement of his thought is permitted, he will remain in the nursery for the rest of his days. Would the infant ever learn to talk if his parents, armed with rules and directions and prohibitions, were to try to teach him how to do it.

We learn to think by keeping on thinking. It is true that in this as in other matters conscious reflection on what we are doing and how we are doing it may from time to time serve the useful purpose of waking the subconscious forces of the soul from the slumber of stagnation and routine, and stimulating them to fresh activity. But the dream of attaining to finality in formulating the laws of thought is even idler than the dream of attaining to finality in the art of thinking.

In providing for the due measurement, by subtle and secret methods of its own, of qualitative gradation, intuitional reasoning provides also for the effective use of what I have called living words. On the higher levels of thought these are the only words that really

count; and intuitional reasoning is the only reasoning that can make effective use of them—the only kind which recognizes that they are alive, and which allows them to retain their life. The higher thought ascends, the more widely does the expression of it, when it is under the control of syllogistic logic, diverge from reality; for “words which denote things”, as Cardinal Newman has reminded us in a passage which I have already quoted, “have innumerable implications; but in inferential exercises it is the very triumph of the clearness and hardness of head which is the characteristic talent for the art, to have stripped them of all these connatural senses, to have drained them of that depth and breadth of associations which constitute their poetry, their rhetoric and their historical life, and to have starved each term down till it has become the ghost of itself, and everywhere the same ghost”. And when living words have been drained of their very life and become mere ghosts or husks of themselves, it must needs be that the propositions into which they enter share in the same process of devitalization and desiccation, and cease at least to bear any relation whatever to reality, to have any meaning which is worth transmitting from mind to mind.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In a book which I wrote some years ago, and which has never been reprinted, I quoted a passage from Fr. S. J. Hunter's *Outlines of Dogmatic Theology*, which is worth requoteing as furnishing an apt example of how words, when one is moving under “logical” guidance among high abstractions, can run away with thought. It is a disquisition on the internal constitution of the Trinity, and it reads as follows: “Since the Nature of God is one, the Three Persons can be distinguished by nothing but their relations. Each procession gives rise to a relation between the Principle and Him that proceeds: hence

Intuitional reasoning, on the other hand, far from devitalizing the words and phrases that it uses, may be said to infuse new life into them, by discovering in

there are four relations, for in each Procession we may consider the relation of the Producer to the Produced, or of the Produced to the Producer. Thus between the Father and the Son we have the relations of Paternity and Filiation, or Sonship; the second Procession furnishes Spiration, Active and Passive. These relations are perfections, and yet there is not more perfection in one Person than in the others, or in the Essence from which they all spring. For the Essence contains all these perfections *eminently*: they are also found in each Person, *eminently*, inasmuch as the Person has the Essence: *equivalently*, for the personality of each is equivalent to the other personalities; and in some sense *formally* in virtue of the Perichoresis. That by which one of the Divine Persons is distinguished from another is called a *Notion*, as making the Person *known*. Thus it belongs to the First Person alone to be unproduced and to be Father: the Second Person alone is Son, and together with the First is Breather, if we may use the English verb *breathe* to correspond to the Latin substantive Spiration: the Third Person is Breathed. Thus there are five Notions: to be Unproduced, Paternity, Filiation, and Spiration, Active and Passive. The meaning will be helped if the arithmetical sequence is observed: One Nature, Two Processions, Three Persons, Four Relations, and Five Notions." May I repeat my comment on this passage,—a comment which was always in my mind while I was studying the three volumes of Fr. Hunter's work? "Has this elaborate analysis of what is supposed to be the most profound and sacred of all mysteries any meaning, any real content? Is there anything in the eternal course of things which corresponds to it in any respect or degree? Or is it merely an analysis and systematization of fantastic notions which deductive reasoning, running riot at will owing to its immunity from verification, has given rise to, —notions so fantastic that the further elaboration of them means nothing less than a progressive divergence from reality?"

them, in its very effort to use them with effect, new shades, new subtleties, new depths, new potentialities of meaning. For in intuitional reasoning about great matters thought, feeling its way from point to point, finds for itself, in response to the impressions made on it by the realities which it is exploring, the words and phrases which shall best give utterance to it and convey it to other minds; and, in finding those words and phrases, it enriches them with their new associations and to that extent makes them more vividly alive. As the mind ascends, in its quest of reality, from height to height, its utterances, evoked by thinking which grows more and more emotional, become, first, *literary*—and in literature there are many levels, in respect of the force of the appeal which is made and the degree of conviction which is carried; then *poetical*—and here too the range is wide from what wins a ready assent to what moves the heart to thoughts that “lie too deep for tears”; and lastly, *mystical*, when the experiences are so overwhelmingly vivid and convincing, that they may be said to blind with excess of light, the very inability of the mystic to find adequate expression for what he sees and feels and is assured of, bearing eloquent witness to the penetrative power of his vision and the limitless sweep of his thought. The silence of the mystic, broken from time to time by his faltering utterance of sublime paradoxes, is the highest level of expression to which the soul, in its struggle to see and know, can hope to attain. At the opposite pole to it are the formulas of the theologian who has surrendered the helm of his thought to a word-bound logic—formulas which are as empty of content as the silence of the mystic is full.

But the supreme merit of intuitional reasoning lies in this, that it reflects in itself whatever progress the thinker is making in his own inner life. Intuitional reasoning is an effort of the whole self. Therefore it gains in efficiency, in depth of insight and comprehensiveness of grasp, in proportion as the self grows in wisdom and stature. "It is the mind that reasons and controls its own reasoning and not any technical apparatus of words and propositions." And the mind is a vital aspect of the self. Therefore the truer, the better, the more real the self, the clearer will be its vision and the larger the range of its thought. Grow, and you will know. Make yourself more real, and you will see deeper into the heart of reality.

But that is a theme on which, as we shall see, much remains to be said.

## CHAPTER II

### THE WORLD AS BRAHMA

IT is to intuitional reasoning that we owe what is wisest and truest in the philosophy of the Upanishads, the philosophy which, as a seeker for wisdom and truth, I am now about to study. The Rishis,<sup>1</sup> the sages of Ancient India, in the seclusion of the forests to which they retired in the evening of life, in order to meditate on the master problems of existence, had no use for the logic of Aristotle. Words could not satisfy their thirst for knowledge. Verbal arguments, however conclusive they might seem to be, could not carry conviction to their inner selves. They trusted to the penetrative and illuminative power of contem-

<sup>1</sup> The Upanishads were the work of many minds; but I still think, as I did when I wrote *The Creed of Buddha*, that "behind those many minds stands the shadowy form of one Master Thinker". For the transition from the "naturalism" and externalism of the earlier Vedas to the spiritual idealism of the great Upanishads, a movement which was in part a reaction against the formalism of the later Vedas or Brahmanas, must surely have had a leader of outstanding character and genius; and the unity of thought and purpose which is characteristic of those Upanishads does undoubtedly point to an ultimate unity of origin. But if there was such a leader he is unknown to history; and we must therefore be content to think of the Upanishads as the work of many minds, contemplation (in the full and deep sense of the word) rather than ratiocination having been the instrument of their thinking.

plation, that energy of the spirit which is at once actively exploratory of the unknown and the mysterious, and passively receptive of guiding influences from these. And in that faith, and in the fact that they had retired from the world (when their time for retirement had come) in order to try to understand it, there was implicit a forecast of their final interpretation of the universe. So true is it (if I may repeat my own words) that a philosopher's way of thinking both implies and determines the general tenor of his philosophic thought.

Contemplation, which involves a turning away from the study of the sensible world for its own sake, and which resolves itself at last into self-exploration, has implicit in it a refusal to accept the world of matter and form at its face value. It was here that the thinkers of Ancient India parted, for good and all, from the thinkers of Ancient Greece. The faith of the latter in the infallibility of sense-perception and therefore in the intrinsic reality of the outward world, committed them to the dualism of subject and object, a dualism which not even the most thoroughgoing materialism can efface; whereas the very impulse which drove the Rishis away from the world, when they sought to understand it, which drove them to seek for an explanation of it in the mystery of their own selfhood, had its source in an instinctive conviction that the air of intrinsic reality which the outward world wears is illusory and that they must look elsewhere for the "Real of all reals".

For the present we need not go further into the question of where they were to seek for Reality. That will be the theme of the next chapter. What we have

to ask ourselves now is what was the first general conception that they formed of the object of their search. I have spoken of the divergence between Greek and Indian philosophy on the higher levels of speculative thought. We need not go far to find an explanation of that divergence. No contrast could be greater than that between the face of Nature in India, and in Greece. And that contrast must be held responsible, in no small measure, for the contrast between the respective trends of Indian and Greek philosophy. That it would show itself in different ways of thinking was as certain as that sooner or later the assumptions which underlay the different ways of thinking would appear as the central conceptions of different systems of thought. The contrast between Greek dialectic and Indian contemplation, as instruments of high thinking, at once reflected and led up to a contrast which went into the very heart of things, which was all-embracing and all-controlling. In the broken up seas and lands of Greece, with their vividly clear atmosphere, where, as we have seen, Nature herself militates against the mysterious and the infinite becoming centres of attraction to speculative thought, the ascription of intrinsic reality to the familiar, the limited, the phenomenal, to Aristotle's world of matter and form, may be said to have been predestined; whereas in the deep forests, in the vast plains, under the shadow of the mighty mountains, along the courses of the great rivers of India, the horizon of speculative thought would tend to recede into the infinite, and the search for ultimate reality to be dominated, even in its earliest stages, by a latent conviction of the unity of the universe, of the oneness of the All.



Liberation from belief in the intrinsic reality of the material world was an essential element in the Rishi's faith in the oneness of the All. It was through the doctrine of Māyā, of the illusoriness of the whole outward order of things, that he achieved liberation. That doctrine is readily misinterpreted by Western thought. When the Indian thinker says that the apparent reality of the outward world is illusory, he does not mean that the outward world is non-existent. The dualism of the real and the non-existent has no place in his thought. What he does mean is that the air of intrinsic reality, and of the exclusive possession of reality, which the outward world wears is illusory; that it is not for us, though we are aware of the world through sense-perception and have classified its phenomena and tabulated its laws and explored many of its secrets, to guarantee that it is in itself what it seems to be. And he is surely right. The very advance of our knowledge of the physical world is making us hesitate to-day, even as scientists—let alone as speculative thinkers—to give that guarantee; for the further we carry our exploration of its secrets, the more difficult is it for us to say with any confidence what the phenomenal world, *quâ* phenomenal, really is.

The doctrine of Māyā, far from limiting the range of the real, opens up a limitless field to our conception of it. *Omnis determinatio est negatio*. Acceptance of form as in any sense fixed and final commits us to the dualism of subject and object; and in the abyss which opens up between subject and object the reality of the world is ultimately engulfed. It was towards the world as a whole, towards the universe in the unity of its totality, that the thought of Ancient India, in its

quest of ultimate reality, instinctively turned. And the doctrine of Māyā removed the chief obstacle to the free flight of her thought towards that ideal goal. The goal of her thought, the universe in the unity of its totality, has been known in India from time immemorial as Brahma. The imaginative thought of the sages of the Upanishads invested Brahma, as we shall see, with many forms; but it found rest in none of these; and it never wavered from what was essential in its conception of Him, from its vision of Him as the One and the All.

What do the Upanishads tell us about Him? They tell us that He is essentially formless. After naming in detail the chief forms of being, they go on to say:

"These are assuredly the foremost forms of the supreme, the immortal, the bodiless Brahma. . . . Verily the whole world is Brahma. Verily these which are its highest forms one should meditate upon, and praise and then deny. For with these one moves higher and higher in the worlds."<sup>1</sup>

Elsewhere we read

"There are assuredly two forms of Brahma: the formed and the formless. Now that which is the formed is unreal; that which is the formless, is real, is Brahma, is light."

They tell us that Brahma is the vanishing point, so

<sup>1</sup> Except where otherwise specified, the quotations in this and the two following chapters come from Professor Robert Hume's translation of *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads*. I have thanked Professor Hume in the Introduction for his kindness in allowing me to quote freely from his translations of the Sanskrit text.

to speak, of all attempts to explain the universe. In one passage we are told that "the worlds are woven, warp and woof" on a hierarchical succession of beings, such as water, wind, the atmosphere, the sun, moon, stars, gods, etc., till we come at last to Brahma. On what are the worlds of Brahma woven? The answer to this question is "Do not question too much"—Brahma is the "divinity about which further questions cannot be asked".

"Verily", they tell us, "in the beginning this world was Brahma, the limitless One—limitless to the east, limitless to the south, limitless to the west, limitless to the north, and above and below, limitless in every direction. Truly, for Him east and the other directions exist not, nor across, nor below, nor above. Incomprehensible is that supreme soul, unlimited, unborn, not to be reasoned about, unthinkable—He whose soul is space. In the dissolution of the world He alone remains awake. From that space He assuredly awakes this world, which is a mass of thought. It is thought by Him, and in Him it disappears."

He is "the One who rules over every single source,  
In whom this whole world comes together and dis-  
solves,

... the source and origin of the gods . . .

... the overlord of the gods,

On whom the worlds do rest. . . .

Minuter than the minute, in the midst of confusion

The Creator of all, of manifold forms,

The One Embracer of the Universe."

He is "the Unshaken One who stands in the midst of Pure Being . . . the creator of all, the soul of all, the enjoyer of all, the lord of all, the inmost being of

everything. Verily this whole world is Brahma. Tranquil let one worship it as that from which He came forth, as that into which He will be dissolved, as that in which He breathes."

"The designation for Him is the Real of the real. Verily breathing creatures are the real. He is their Real."

"He is the maker of all, the all-knower, self-sourced . . . the ruler of Primary Matter and of the spirit, the lord of qualities. The cause of reincarnation and of liberation, of continuance and of bondage."

"The One spreader of the net, . . .  
Who rules all the worlds with His ruling powers,  
The One who alone stands in their arising and in their continued existence."

Brahma is "He who dwelling in the earth, yet is other than the earth, whom the earth does not know, whose body the earth is, who controls the earth from within."

As with earth, so with "the waters", "the fire", "the atmosphere", "the wind", "the sky", "the sun", "the quarters of heaven", "the moon and stars", "space", "the darkness", "the light".

"Brahma is He who dwelling in all things, yet is other than all things, whom all things do not know, whose body all things are, who controls all things from within."

So too with all the parts and aspects of man's being He dwells in each, is other than each, is unknown to each, is embodied in each, controls each from within.

"He is the unseen Seer, the unheard Hearer, the unthought Thinker, the un-understood Understander. Other than He there is no seer. Other than He there is no hearer. Other than He there is no thinker. Other than He there is no understander. He is your Soul, the Inner Controller, the Immortal."

He is the self-luminous light of the world. Apart from Him there is no light.

"The sun shines not there, nor the moon and stars;  
These lightnings shine not, much less this (earth's) fire.  
After Him, as He shines, doth everything shine,  
The whole world is illumined with His light."

The being of Brahma is inexhaustible. Its fountain is filled to overflowing by its unceasing outflow.

"The yon is fulness; fulness this.  
From fulness fulness doth proceed.  
Withdrawing fulness' fulness off,  
E'en fulness then itself remains."

And Brahma is the ultimate source of all power and all activity. This truth finds apt recognition in the parable of Brahma and the Gods. The story goes that

"Brahma once won a victory for the Gods,—Wind, Fire and the rest. They thought 'Ours is this victory, our very own the triumph.' Knowing their thought Brahma stood before them. They knew Him not, and wondered who He was. They said to Fire 'Find out, all-knowing one, who that wondrous Being is.' Fire did their bidding, and, as he drew near to the stranger, was greeted with the words, 'Who art thou?' 'Why, I am Fire,' he answered, 'all-knowing Fire am I.' 'What

power is in thine I-ness, then?' said the stranger. 'Why, I can burn up everything on earth,' said Fire. Then the stranger set a straw before him and bade him burn it. He smote it with all his might but could not even scorch it. So he returned and said, 'I could not find out who that wondrous Being is.' Then Air was sent on the same quest, and he too was asked 'Who art thou?' 'Why, I am Air,' he answered, 'breather in mother space am I.' 'What power is in thine I-ness, then?' said the stranger. 'Why, I can blow away all things on earth,' said Air. Then the stranger set a straw before him and bade him blow it away. He smote it with all his might, but could not stir it. So he too returned and said, 'I could not find out who that wondrous Being is.' Then 'the Lord' [Indra] was sent; but the stranger, as he drew near to him, vanished from his sight, and where he had been standing there stood a beautiful woman arrayed in gold. Of her the Lord asked who the stranger was. 'Brahma,' she said. 'In Brahma's conquest do ye triumph.'"<sup>1</sup>

The moral of this story is plain. Apart from the One the individual is nothing. Even the high Gods triumph in Brahma's might. Left to themselves they are helpless; they have no power, no life. Their "I-ness", their self-hood, when severed from the universal self-hood; is a pure delusion. Fire cannot of himself burn a straw. Air cannot of himself blow a straw away. Brahma, the Universal Self, is the true self of each of the high Gods. He is the One that makes it possible for the Many to change and pass.

He is the ultimate object of all unselfish desire.

<sup>1</sup> From the translation by G. R. S. Mead and Jagadish Chandra Chattopādhyāya of *Kena Upanishad*.

"Lo, verily, not for love of the husband is a husband dear, but for love of the Soul a husband is dear."

So too with love of "the wife", of "the sons", of "the wealth", of "the worlds", of "the gods", and so forth.

"Lo, verily, not for love of all is all dear, but for love of the Soul all is dear."

And He is the ultimate object of all religious devotion. His is the altar on which all offerings are laid. He knows that the lesser gods are His Viceroys,—embodiments in their several ways of the ever-changing dream of Him, who is All in All, which possesses the growing soul of Humanity; and, far from resenting the worship that is paid to them, He accepts it as meant for Himself:—

"Nay and of hearts that follow other Gods  
In simpler faith, their prayers arise to me,  
O Kunti's son! though they pray wrongfully;  
For I am the Receiver and the Lord  
Of every sacrifice."<sup>1</sup>

Finally, and above all, Brahma is the quintessence of all that is essential. From what is outermost in outward Nature to what is innermost in the soul of man, whatever is pleasant, whatever is beautiful, whatever is good is a thrill of the one life and a gleam of the one light:—

"I am the fresh taste of the water; I  
The silver of the moon, the gold of the sun  
... I am the good sweet smell  
Of the moistened earth. I am the fire's red light,

<sup>1</sup> *The Song Celestial*, by Sir Edwin Arnold.

The vital air moving in all what moves,  
The holiness of hallowed souls, the root  
Undying, whence hath sprung whatever is,  
The wisdom of the wise, the intellect  
Of the informed, the greatness of the great,  
The splendour of the splendid . . .  
These am I, free from passion and desire;  
Yet am I right desire in those who yearn."<sup>1</sup>

Such was the vision of the universe which unveiled itself to Indian contemplation. It was a living, breathing, palpitating, all-embracing, all-sustaining, all-animating whole; real, as a whole, in virtue of its own inmost reality. Words cannot measure the difference between it and the ruined and fallen world of Western faith and thought; a world whose reality has been transferred, in obedience to a dualistic logic, to the further side of an impassable abyss—impassable except from the further side—and there personified as God, the Creator, the Ruler, and the Judge; a world which is distinct "really and in essence" from the God who created it, and whose favour it forfeited by a primal act of disobedience to His will; a world which cannot recover the favour which it forfeited except in the form of doles of supernatural grace, transmitted to it through chosen human channels—in logical strictness through one channel only—apart from which there is no salvation for it, no redemption from its ruin, no means of arising from its fall; a world which has been so completely despiritualized by the dualistic logic which made two worlds out of its one, that even the emancipated thought of the West can with difficulty rise above the conception of it as a vast complex

<sup>1</sup> *The Song Celestial*, by Sir Edwin Arnold.



of soulless machinery, into which, "through the play of blind mechanical forces", "life has stumbled by accident", and from which "by the play of the same forces, life will at last be frozen out" and pass away.<sup>1</sup>

Which is the truer vision of the universe—the vision of it as riven asunder by an abyss which absorbs into itself all that is real on either side of it, the spirituality of "Nature", and the substantiality of the Supernatural world, leaving in the last resort a dead world on one side and a shadow-world on the other;—this, or the vision of it as a self-centred, self-evolved, self-evolving, self-contained, self-transcending Whole, unified by its own infinitude, real in its own inner being, shining by its own inner light?

<sup>1</sup> See p. 85.

### CHAPTER III

## BRAHMA AS THE ÂTMAN

(THE LIVING WHOLE AS THE REAL SELF)

**T**HE whole world is Brahma. But what do we mean by the whole world? Is the world divine in its extension, i.e. detail by detail? Or is it divine as a whole? To the speculative thought of Ancient India,<sup>1</sup> which regarded the apparent reality of the material world as illusory, the idea of deifying the world in its material extension would never have presented itself; and, if it had, would have been instantly rejected. When the Rishis thought of the world as Brahma they thought of it as a whole, and a living whole. But if the world is a living whole, where are we to look for the headquarters of its being, the headquarters of its life, its reality, its divinity? And, to begin with, are we to look for it within or without?

This takes me back to a question which I have already asked and provisionally answered. Which is more real, the Knower or the Known? The percipient and cognitive self or the objects of its perception and

<sup>1</sup> When I speak of the speculative thought of Ancient India, I am thinking of the dominant trend of its thinking. India has had—and no doubt still has—materialistic schools of thought; but materialism has never been the dominant philosophy of the land. Materialism and the belief in reincarnation cannot co-exist.

cognition? To this question the thinkers of Ancient India were at no loss for an answer. The doctrine of Reincarnation safeguarded the individual self so far as it deserved to be safeguarded. But the Rishis, in the seclusion of their forests, went far beyond that popular belief in their quest of ultimate reality. Contemplation, as an instrument of speculative thought, resolves itself at last (as I have already suggested) into self-exploration. It is in itself a turning away from, or passing beyond, the sights and sounds and other distractions of the external world; an instinctive rejection of these as illusory, so far at least as they claim to be intrinsically real; a turning away from the allurements of form to the exploration of what is formless, to the search for reality in the uncharted spaces of one's own inner self.

What other road than that of contemplation can the adventurous spirit take? Let us go back, let me for one go back, to the starting-point of the spirit in its quest of the real as such. Is there anything which is intrinsically real, real in itself, real in its own right? No doubt there is. But is there anything which I can know to be intrinsically real, anything of the intrinsic reality of which I can feel fully assured? The world which lies around me seems to be real in itself, and it seems to be such-and-such. Is it in itself the such-and-such which it appears to me? Most emphatically No. Physical science, which began by postulating its intrinsic reality, in its attempt by searching analysis to discover the innermost secret of its presumed reality, has resolved it into what the great physicists themselves describe as a world of "shadows" and "symbols"; a world which differs widely from the

material world which we look out upon, a world which seems to owe its phenomenal reality—its appearance in the form of our material world—to the interpretative action of man's percipient mind. And the scientific analysis of matter is still incomplete. The shadows become more and more shadowy; and it may well be that there is behind them a substance which is immaterial in its very essence.

I cannot take upon myself to guarantee the intrinsic reality of anything that is outside myself, of anything that is the object of my sense-perception. It would be presumptuous of me to do so. I see things as they seem to be. I cannot pretend to see them as they really are. It is not for me, the sense-bound knower and thinker, to say

"I am the eye wherewith the Universe  
Beholds itself and knows itself divine"

or less than divine—perhaps a mere machine—if it so seems to me.

Am I, then, to give up the search for intrinsic reality as hopeless? Not necessarily. There is one quarter of thought which I have not yet explored. The fact that I cannot guarantee the intrinsic reality of what seems to me to be intrinsically real, cannot guarantee that the world of form which lies around me is, *as such*, the self-existent reality which it seems to be—suggests to me that I must ask two things of whatever claims to be intrinsically real:

- (1) *that it shall guarantee its own reality,*
- (2) *that it shall be absolutely formless.*

(1) It must guarantee its own reality. For if what

claims to be intrinsically real has to go outside itself, e.g. to my mind, for the guarantee that it needs, it will in so doing subordinate its own reality to that of the guarantor; just as one who goes to a capitalist or a company for a financial guarantee admits, in doing so, the comparative inferiority of his own financial status.

(2) It must be absolutely formless—and therefore free to take every conceivable form. So far as it has form (with matter as its correlate) it is dependent on the percipient mind for its appearance, and on what underlies its own quasi-material form for its measure of reality. It is only by being formless that the claimant to intrinsic reality can avoid having to come to me for a guarantee.

Now there is only one thing within the range of my experience which fulfils both these conditions—*my own self*. In and through my consciousness of self I guarantee my own reality. Among all man's experiences that of self-consciousness is in a sense unique. It is a self-certifying experience. The revelation of self to self guarantees its own authenticity, guarantees it to the self, which is at once subject and object of the experience. It asks for no corroborative evidence.

"There shines no light save its own light to show  
Itself unto itself."

Nothing can come between the self as subject and the self as object. If any doubt were thrown upon the authenticity of that revelation, the self, which is subject and object, would have to weigh the arguments against the genuineness of an experience which

is known only to itself. Even the most plausible of arguments would weigh light in that scale.

And the experience of self, as given in self-consciousness, has another feature which is all its own. Self as subject is fully assured of the reality of self as object, but can form no picture of it, can find no words in which to describe it. The experience admits one, as it were, into a formless world. When I contemplate myself, there is nothing on which my outward or my inward eye can rest; nothing, absolutely nothing, not even a blank or a void. And yet, I feel, with an assurance which transcends all intellectual conviction, that the "nothing" which faces me is real with a reality which cannot be gainsaid.

What name are we to give to this Formless Reality which I behold, if only for a timeless moment, whenever I contemplate myself? Shall we speak of it as Spirit? Or as Self? Either name will do. But, so far as their respective associations go, the former has the wider and freer range of meaning. "Self," when we begin to think and speak about it, too readily individualizes itself, too readily clothes itself in form. "Spirit" suggests, in some at least of its contexts, transcendence of individuality, liberation from form. The *idea* of selfhood is, however, coextensive with that of spirit; and the day will come when we shall realize that self is not an individualized entity, but a limitless world.

This, then, is the conclusion to which my quest of intrinsic reality has led me. Spirit—that which reveals itself to itself, however faintly and fitfully, in the self-consciousness of man—is the one supreme self-existent Reality. Formless in its essence, it takes innumerable

forms. These are ever changing and passing; but the One, the ultimate substance, the changeless essence, remains.

And this was the conclusion which the Rishis reached when they identified Brahma, the Supreme, Self-Existent Reality, the All which is One, with the Ātman, the self, the soul, the inner being of Man.

It may be doubted if they were led to that goal by any train of discursive thought. It is more probable that in their case logical or quasi-logical thinking was superseded by intuitional reasoning, or even, in some minds, by direct introspective vision, a vision which could give no account of its procedure, but was all the more sure that the truth of things had been revealed to it. That the truth of things had been revealed to them, the Sages of India, communing with themselves in their solitudes, seem to have been well assured. The identification of Brahma with the Ātman is the central conception of the philosophy of the Upanishads. It takes many forms, and is approached from many quarters of thought.

As Brahma is the unifying principle in the universe, so is the self (Ātman) the unifying principle in man. Indeed it is through recognition of the self as the unifying principle in one's own being that one arrives at the conception of the Self—under the name of Brahma—as the unifying principle in the universe. Between the Self as Brahma and the self as you or I, there is ceaseless reciprocity in one's thought,—and ceaseless reciprocity in the inner being of each. Brahma and the Ātman are one. Brahma is in each of us as "breath", as "voice", as the "eye", as the "ear", as "the mind". He is each of these; but He is more than

these. "He is just one's self, for therein all these become one."

Again and again in the Upanishads Brahma appears as the World-Soul; and again and again the World-Soul appears as one's own real self.

"One should worship the Self alone as his (true) world. . . . the Self verily is a world of all created things."

"Not for love of all is all dear, but for love of the Soul, is all dear. Lo, verily it is the Soul that should be seen, that should be hearkened to, that should be thought on, that should be pondered on. Lo, verily, with the seeing of, with the hearkening to, with the thinking of, with the understanding of the Soul, this world—all is known. . . . Everything has deserted him who knows everything in aught else than the Soul. . . . Everything here is what the Soul is."

"Verily this Soul is the overlord of all things, the King of all things. As all the spokes are held together in the hub and felly of a wheel, just so in this Soul all things, all gods, all worlds, all breathing things, all these selves are held together."

And this Soul which is in all things and is all things is no mere pantheistic soul in which all things animate and inanimate share alike. "Explain to me Him," says a disciple to his teacher, "who is just the Brahma present and not beyond our ken, who is the Soul in all things". The answer comes "He is your soul who is in all things".

"He who dwelling in all things, yet is other than all things, whom all things do not know, whose body all



things are, who controls all things from within—He is your Soul, the Inner Controller, the Immortal."

"Now the light which shines higher than this heaven, on the backs of all, on the backs of everything, in the highest worlds, than which there is no higher—verily that is the same as this light which is here within a person."

"He who consists of mind, whose body is life, whose form is light, whose conception is truth, whose soul is space, containing all works, containing all desires, containing all odours, containing all tastes, encompassing this whole world, the unspeaking, the unconcerned—this Soul of mine within the heart is smaller than a grain of rice, or a barley corn, or a grain of millet, or the kernel of a grain of millet; this Soul of mine within the heart is greater than the earth, greater than the atmosphere, greater than the sky, greater than these worlds . . . this is the Soul of mine within the heart, this is Brahma."

"The Soul is below. The Soul is above. The Soul is to the west. The Soul is to the east. The Soul is to the south. The Soul is to the north. The Soul, indeed, is this whole world. Vital breath arises from the Soul; Hope from the Soul; Memory . . . Space . . . Heat . . . Water . . . Appearance and Disappearance . . . Food . . . Strength . . . Understanding . . . Meditation . . . Thought . . . Conception . . . Mind . . . Speech . . . Name . . . Sacred sayings . . . Sacred works . . . indeed this whole world from the Soul."

"As far, verily, as this world-space extends, so far extends the space within the heart. Within it, indeed, are contained both heaven and earth, both sun and

moon, lightning and the stars, both what one possesses here and what one does not possess; everything here is contained within it. . . . That is the real city of Brahma. In it desires are contained. That is the Soul, free from evil, ageless, deathless, sorrowless, hungerless, thirstless, whose desire is the Real, whose conception is the Real."

"Verily, the body is mortal. It has been appropriated by Death. But it is the standing ground of that deathless, bodiless Self."

"Both he who is here in a person and he who is yonder in the sun—he is one."

"You (Brahma) are the Soul of every single being  
What you are this am I."

"He is the world-protector. He is the world-sovereign.  
He is the lord of all. He is my self."

"More minute than the minute, greater than the great  
Is the Soul that is set in the heart of a creature  
here."

"The Inner Soul of all things, the One Controller,  
Who makes His one form manifold—  
The wise who perceive Him as standing in oneself,  
They and no others have eternal happiness."

"Vast, heavenly, of unthinkable form  
And more minute than the minute. It shines forth.  
It is farther than the far, yet here near at hand,  
Set down in the secret place (of the heart) even here  
among those who behold it."

"His form is not to be beheld.  
 No one soever sees Him with the eye.  
 They who know Him with heart and mind  
 As abiding in the heart become immortal."

"The one God, hidden in all things,  
 All-pervading, the Inner Soul of all things,  
 The overseer of deeds, in all things abiding,  
 The witness, the sole thinker, devoid of qualities,  
 The one controller of the inactive many,  
 Who makes the one seed manifold—  
 The wise who perceive Him as standing in one's self  
 They, and no others, have eternal happiness."

"He [the Soul] bears himself twofold: as the breathing spirit here, and as yon sun. . . .

"Yon sun verily is the outer soul. The inner Soul is the breathing spirit.

"Hence the course of the inner Soul is measured by the course of the outer Soul. For thus has it been said: 'Now, whoever is a knower, freed from evil, an overseer of his senses, pure-minded, established on That, introspective is even He [the Soul].' "

"And the course of the outer Soul is measured by the course of the inner Soul. For thus has it been said: 'Now, that golden Person who is within the sun, who looks down upon this earth from His golden place is even He who dwells within the lotus of the heart and eats food'."

"He who is yonder, yonder Person in the sun—I myself am he."

"He, truly, indeed, is the Self within the heart, very subtle, kindled like fire, assuming all forms. This

whole world is His food. On Him creations here are woven.

"He is the Self which is free from evil, ageless, deathless, sorrowless; free from uncertainty, free from fetters, whose conception is the Real, whose desire is the Real. He is the supreme Lord. He is the ruler of being. He is the protector of beings. . . .

"He who is in the fire, and he who is here in the heart, and he who is yonder in the sun—he is one."

"That which is the finest essence—this whole world has that as its soul. . . . That is Reality. That is Ātman. That art thou, Svetāketu."

*That art thou.* Here, in three short and simple words, we have what is quintessential in the philosophy of Ancient India. The Real of all reals, the very centre and summit of Reality, is in one's self. Nay, It is one's self. What It is,—formless, spaceless, ageless, more minute than the minute, yet embracing in itself all forms, all spaces, all ages—is what I really and truly am. Until I have found It and become one with It, I have fallen short of my own reality.

The basis of this philosophy is obviously experiential, not dialectical. An interpretation of the universe which centres in a stupendous paradox is the outcome of vision, not of any process of reasoning. "Seeing (in the deepest sense of the word) is believing" (in the truest sense of that word). To subordinate to *any* premise a conclusion which claims to be unique is to discredit its claim and undermine its authority. In their quest of Reality, the Sages of the Upanishads fall into line with the poets of all ages, whose feelings, in their seasons of inspiration, find words for themselves; and with the

mystics, whose experiences go so deep that, as they struggle to express themselves, their words tremble at last into a silence which says more than any speech.

But the basis of the philosophy of the Upanishads is something more than poetical, and more than mystical. It is also popular. Otherwise it would not be broad enough to support its superstructure. In the identification of Brahma, the ultimately Real, with the Ātman, the subject and object of self-awareness, we have the apotheosis, so to speak, of man's instinctive belief in his own soul or spirit as the reality of his being, and in soul life or spirit life as the fountain-head of all activity. This belief, which has embodied itself in the crude philosophy or religion—you may call it either—of animism, can be sophistically reasoned away; but it is so securely rooted in the subconscious self that it cannot otherwise be undermined or even shaken.

So much for the genesis and the basis of the philosophy which identifies Brahma with the Ātman, with your Ātman or my Ātman. What does it teach us? What does its central doctrine imply? That the claim of the individual self, *as such*, to intrinsic reality is as illusory as the similar claim on the part of the outward world; that in the former case, as in the latter, the doctrine of Māyā holds good. That Brahma, the World-Soul, the Universal Self, is the real self of each one of us; that as such He unmasks the imposture of individuality, so far as this connotes separation from other persons and other things. That through the experience of self-consciousness one is admitted, if only for a timeless moment, into the real world, the

world of self or spirit, the formless world which underlies and makes possible all forms, and which can therefore absorb into itself all the outward things which oppress us, when we think of them as outward, by their insistent claim to self-existence.

*That art thou.* This is what the great mystics of all religions and all ages say to us when they can find words for their incommunicable experiences. Here are some of their sayings: "My *Me* is God, nor do I recognize any other *Me*, except my God Himself." "The love of God is our true self-love, the love characteristic of and directed to our true selves."<sup>1</sup> "We may never come to full knowing of God till we know first clearly our own Soul."<sup>2</sup> "And when we verily and clearly see and know what our Self is then shall we verily and clearly see and know our Lord God in the fulness of joy."<sup>2</sup> If I am to know God directly I must become complete He and He I; so that He and this I become and are one I."<sup>3</sup> "To mount to God is to enter into one's self. For he who inwardly entereth and intimately penetrateth into himself gets above and beyond himself and truly mounts up to God."<sup>4</sup> "If thou wilt arrive at a perfect knowledge and enjoyment of Me, the eternal Truth, thou shouldst never go outside the knowledge of thyself."<sup>5</sup> The Soul or Self of man is God. And what is God? "The glorious God is the whole essence of things both visible and invisible."<sup>1</sup> This is the philosophy of the Upanishads. But these are the sayings, not of Indian recluses, but of Christian saints. I will end with a saying which will

<sup>1</sup> St. Catherine of Genoa.      <sup>2</sup> Dame Julian of Norwich.

<sup>3</sup> Eckhart.

<sup>4</sup> The author of *De Adhaerendo Deo*.

<sup>5</sup> St. Catherine of Siena.

prepare the way for what remains of this book—the saying in which that great saint and mystic, St. Catherine of Genoa, summed up the creed of her heart: “My Being is God, not by simple participation but by a true transformation of my Being.”

## CHAPTER IV

### THROUGH KNOWLEDGE TO SALVATION

**A** GAIN and again, as we read the Upanishads, we are told that knowledge brings salvation. By knowledge is meant knowledge of the supreme truth that Brahma and the Ātman are one, or, in other words, that the World-Soul is the real self of each one of us. What is meant by salvation? Here are some of the answers to this question:

"Whoever knows 'I am Brahma' becomes the All; even the gods have no power to prevent his becoming this, for he becomes their self."

"He who knows this becomes the self of all beings."

"He who knows the chiefest and best becomes the chiefest and best."

"Whatever conquest is Brahma's, whatever attainment, that conquest he conquers, that attainment he attains who knows this" (i.e. who knows that what Brahma is, he is).

"He who knows that supreme Brahma becomes very Brahma. He crosses over sorrow, he crosses over sin. Liberated from the knots of the heart he becomes immortal."

"Verily, O friend! he who recognizes that shadowless,



bodiless, bloodless, pure Imperishable arrives at the Imperishable itself. He knowing All becomes the All."

"They who know Him with heart and soul  
As abiding in the heart become immortal."

"Him who is without beginning and without end, in the  
midst of confusion,  
The Creator of all, of manifold form,  
The One embracer of the universe—  
By knowing God one is released from all fetters."

"The one God, hidden in all things,  
All-pervading, the Inner Soul of all things. . . .  
The wise who perceive Him as standing in one's self—  
They and no others have eternal happiness."

"He who is in the fire, and he who is in the heart  
and he who is yonder in the sun—he is one. To the  
unity of the One goes he who knows this."

"When through self, by the suppressing of the mind,  
one sees the brilliant Self which is more subtle than  
the subtle, then having seen the Self through one's  
self, one becomes selfless."

"The seer sees not death  
Nor sickness, nor any distress,  
The seer sees only the All,  
Obtains the All entirely."

"What is perishable, is Primary Matter. What is  
immortal and imperishable is Hara (The 'Bearer,'  
the soul).

"Over both the perishable and the soul the One  
God rules.

"By meditation upon Him, by union with Him, and by entering into His being more and more, there is finally cessation from every illusion."

"Now he who on all beings  
Looks as just in the Self,  
And on the Self as in all beings—  
He does not shrink away from Him.

"In whom all beings  
Have become just the Self of the discernor—  
Then what delusion, what sorrow is there  
Of him who perceives the unity?"

Through all these sayings runs one dominant conviction; that, on the one hand, the sense of separateness, the instinctive belief in the intrinsic reality of the individual self and of the material things which it possesses and enjoys, is illusory, and as such is the fruitful source of sin and sorrow and death; and that, on the other hand, the sense of oneness with the All, of the All being one's own real self, of the All alone being ultimately real, liberates one from the fetters of self and gives one inner freedom, happiness, immortality.

"In thinking 'This is I' and 'That is mine' one binds himself with himself as does a bird with a snare."

To be released from the snare of self is salvation; and nothing less than knowledge of Brahma as the real self can effect that release.

But how is that knowledge to be won? And if it is won, will it necessarily enter as a saving influence into one's life? These questions lead to another:

What do we mean by knowledge? and what may we suppose the sages of the Upanishads to have meant by it?

Broadly speaking, there are two kinds of knowledge. There is the knowledge which is merely *notional*, which is the outcome of the acceptance of teaching on authority, or (at best) of purely intellectual conviction, which expresses itself in lip assent to propositions, which floats on the surface of the mind, which does not necessarily translate itself into action, and which exercises no transforming influence on character and the conduct of life. And there is the knowledge which is *real*, which is the outcome of deep-seated conviction, of the response of the whole man to what is presented for acceptance, which expresses itself in heartfelt assent, which sinks deep into one's inner being, which necessarily translates itself into action and which therefore exercises a transforming influence on character and the conduct of life. Of the former type is the knowledge which the Athanasian Creed insists upon as necessary to salvation, knowledge (if one may call it so) of what is no personal concern of ours, of the internal constitution of a Godhead which is entirely distinct from the world and from oneself, knowledge of what is as alien from one's own inner life as are the formulas of the mathematician or the chemist, knowledge which has no bearing on the conduct of life and which one cannot possibly translate into action. Of the latter type is the knowledge which the sages of the Upanishads must have had in mind when they told us a truth about ourselves which was of vital importance to us, and which, if acted upon, could not fail to transform

our characters and our lives—the truth that a man has not really found himself until he has lost himself in the All.

That they had that type of knowledge in mind, we may well believe; but they do not always make this clear. Too often they are content to affirm with an air of authority that “he who knows that supreme Brahma becomes very Brahma”, without giving directions either for the attainment of that knowledge or for the conduct of life in accordance with it.

Yet there are scattered passages in the Upanishads in which the way—or at least *a* way—to Brahma knowledge is indicated, if not actually mapped out. And there is one Upanishad, the theme of which is how to attain to knowledge of Brahma, and how—following the same path—to attain to oneness with Brahma and, with it, to freedom from rebirth and death.

That is the Katha Upanishad, which tells the story of Naciketas and the Secret of Death. The story goes that Yama, the God of Death, returning from a three days’ absence from his abode, and finding that Naciketas, a Brahmin, who had visited him in his absence, had not received the hospitality which is due to a Brahmin, by way of atonement for this discourtesy bids him choose three boons. The first and second boons that Naciketas chooses Yama grants without demur. The third boon is to know what comes after death. This Yama is very reluctant to grant. He bids Naciketas choose instead wealth, possessions, long life, pleasures of all kinds. But Naciketas will have none of these. They are all perishable. They are all in the power of death. He will be content with nothing less than to know what there

is "in the great passing on". Yama yields at last to his importunity and discloses to him the secret of death. The secret of death means one thing to the Western, who wants to know whether he, the individual self, survives the death of his body; and another thing to the Indian, who believes in reincarnation, and therefore takes for granted that he will return to earth again and again. What the Indian who is curious in this matter wants to know is whether the cycle of births and deaths goes on for ever or whether there is any way of escape from the "whirlpool of rebirth". This is the question which Death answers; and his answer is in keeping with the general tenor of the teaching of the Upanishads. He begins by telling Naciketas to distinguish between the *pleasant* and the *good*, between desire for enjoyment of what is perishable and desire for possession of what is real; and he goes on to tell him that attachment to the things of earth (which are all perishable), acceptance of these as real, and of the self that desires them as the real self, is the cause of rebirth:

"The passing on is not clear to him who is childish,  
Heedless, deluded with the delusion of wealth,  
Thinking This is the world! There is no other!  
Again and again he comes under my control."

But the real self,

"is not born, nor dies.  
This one has not come from anywhere, has not  
become anyone.  
Unborn, constant, eternal, primeval, this one  
Is not slain when the body is slain."

"More minute than the minute, greater than the  
 great  
 Is the Soul that is set in the heart of a creature  
 here."

And this real self, this World-Soul which is set in the heart of each of us, is the very headquarters of Reality in the Universe. To find the Soul in the self, to recognize It as what one truly is, to identify oneself with It, to make It one's very own—this and no other is the way of salvation, the way of passing beyond sin and sorrow, the way of breaking the ties that bind one to earth, the way of escape from the cycle of births and deaths.

But how is one to find the Soul in the self? By self-transcendence through self-discipline. Yama gives this answer in the form of a parable:

"Know thou the soul as riding in a chariot,  
 The body as the chariot.  
 Know thou the intellect as the chariot-driver  
 And the mind as the reins.

The senses, they say, are the horses;  
 The object of sense, what they range over;  
 The self combined with senses and mind  
 Wise men call the enjoyer.

He who has not understanding,  
 Whose mind is not constantly held firm—  
 His senses are uncontrolled,  
 Like the vicious horses of a chariot-driver.

He, however, who has understanding,  
 Whose mind is constantly held firm—  
 His senses are under control,  
 Like the good horses of a chariot-driver.

He, however, who has not understanding,  
Who is unmindful and ever impure,  
Reaches not the goal,  
But goes on to reincarnation.

He, however, who has understanding,  
Who is mindful and ever pure,  
Reaches the goal  
From which he is born no more."

The self-control which is to bring enlightenment and release from rebirth must be systematic and severe. It must rise to the level of what is known in India as "Yoga", a method of self-training in which suppression of the lower activities by ascetic practice and austere discipline opens to the soul a higher light and a larger world:

"When cease the five  
(Sense) Knowledges together with the mind,  
And the intellect stirs not—  
That, they say, is the highest course.  
This they consider as Yoga—  
The firm holding back of the senses,  
Then one becomes undistracted,  
Yoga truly is the origin and the end."

With this "firm holding back of the senses" comes the suppression of desires.

"When are liberated all  
The desires that lodge in one's heart,  
Then a mortal becomes immortal!  
Therein he reaches Brahma!"

"Then Naciketas, having received this knowledge  
Declared by Death, and the entire rule of Yoga;

Attained Brahma, and became free from passion, free from death,  
And so may any other who knows this in regard to the Soul."

One may well believe that it was by the practice of Yoga, that the Rishis to whom we owe the Upanishads, through the contemplation which Yoga made possible, attained to the vision of Formless Reality in their own inner being, and through this to the knowledge that Brahma and the Ātman are one. If so, one can understand why they constantly insisted that knowledge of the Real brings salvation in the form of possession of the Real or oneness with the Real. From the knowledge that Brahma is the real self to knowledge of Brahma *as* the real self the way is open and clear. The course of self-discipline which leads to the former knowledge leads on, if duly followed, to the latter knowledge, to the knowledge which has its counterpart in oneness with the All.

We shall the better understand what part knowledge plays in the religions of the Far East, if we contrast it with the *faith* which plays so prominent a part in the religions of the West and the Far East. Faith, in Christendom and Islam, is the free gift of the Supernatural God. It is not to be won by any course of self-discipline or by a virtuous life. It takes the form of acceptance on authority—in the last resort on the authority of God Himself,—acceptance as true of what is, humanly speaking, either unknowable or incredible. Much, if not all, of what passes as faith in Christendom is of this type: it expresses itself in the memorizing and repetition of forms of words, which, owing to their presumably supernatural origin, are



supposed to be true in themselves, whatever meanings different minds may find in them, and whatever changes of meaning they may undergo in successive ages,—true in themselves, in the sense in which mathematical and chemical formulas are true in themselves. Faith, for the Christian or the Moslem, may mean much more than this; but it may mean, and often does mean, no more; and if it does mean no more, if there is no element in it of love or aspiration, or *spiritual*<sup>1</sup> devotion, it will bear no fruit in character or conduct; it will be “faith without works”; in a word, it will be “dead”.

The knowledge of Brahma which is held up in the Upanishads as necessary to salvation, though it does not satisfy the “official” definition of faith,<sup>2</sup> has much more in it of the real inwardness of saving faith than has the belief which limits itself to subscription to formulated doctrine. The knowledge which is won by Yoga brings salvation because in itself it *is* salvation, because in itself it is a growing sense of oneness with the All, and therefore of supreme well-being, of highest happiness.

But it is not a knowledge in which all men can share.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> As distinguished from the fanatical devotion to a Church or a Creed which makes the “faithful” regard the slaughter of “infidels” or “heretics” as service acceptable to God. Faith of this sort is not “dead”. It is very much alive, but only in the sense of being active for evil. <sup>2</sup> See p. 78.

<sup>3</sup> I mean by this that it is not a knowledge which all who are now on earth can hope to share in their present lives, or even to seek by the method prescribed in the Upanishads. That we may all share it at last we may well hope. But the way to it is long; and how to make a start in that way is what most of us need to be taught.

The life of ascetic self-discipline involves as a rule a withdrawal from the communal life, from the common pursuits and common interests, of mankind; it is therefore neither possible nor desirable except for a small minority of men. And so far as it is possible and desirable, it ought to be an advanced stage in a life which is open to all men, the life of self-transcendence through self-control, unselfishness and love. If it is not this, the knowledge which it gives may be misused, and forfeited at last because it has been misused. To map out the way of salvation which is open to all men, the way of *becoming* what one really is, was the task which the great teacher who is known to most of us as Buddha set himself, and to which he devoted his life.

## CHAPTER V

### THE BUDDHIST PATH TO KNOWLEDGE AND SALVATION

**W**HAT do the Upanishads teach us?

There are two truths which they take for granted, but do not explicitly teach:

(1) That the individual human soul or self re-incarnates; i.e., returns to earth again and again.

(2) That the successive earth lives are linked together by the Law of Karma, or natural retribution, in virtue of which a man is ever reaping what he has sown, whether in the present or in previous lives.

There are two correlated truths which they seldom explicitly teach, but which are implicit in all their teaching:

(1) That the appearance of intrinsic reality which the outward world, the world of matter and form, wears is illusory.

(2) That the appearance of intrinsic reality which the individual soul or self wears is illusory.

There are five truths which they explicitly teach:

(1) That the Universe is a Whole; that All is One.

(2) That the Universe is a Whole in virtue of the Formless Reality which is at the heart of it, and which they speak of as the *Ātman*, or Soul, or Self.

(3) That the Soul or Self of the Universe is the real self of each one of us.

(4) That to know this—not as a proposition to be learned by heart and assented to, but as a truth to be lived up to and lived in to—brings salvation to the knower, in the form of deliverance from the cycle of births and deaths.

(5) That each of us can, if he pleases, acquire this knowledge for himself by going through a course of ascetic self-discipline, known as Yoga, which will enable him to suppress the lower activities of sense and desire and so set the higher centres of consciousness free to function.

This teaching is sublimely true as far as it goes; but it does not go far enough. It makes no provision for the emancipation of the rank and file of mankind. Yoga, or ascetic self-discipline, involving as it does a withdrawal, partial or complete, from the communal life, from the common pursuits and interests of mankind, is for the few, not for the many. What provision did Indian philosophy make for the spiritual training of the average man? It handed him over to the Brahminic priesthood, who taught him the truth of things (or what passed for such with them) *symbolically*, i.e. embodied it in a ceremonial system and required him to express his belief in it by the due discharge of a series of prescribed rites. This led inevitably to the mechanicalization of his inner life. The knowledge of reality which brings salvation because in itself, as far as it goes, it is salvation—because it demands for its apprehension an ever fuller activity on the part of the higher self, and so quickens the higher self into ever fuller activity—became as alien to him as is the knowledge of the more occult truths of mechanics to an engine driver, or of the more occult truths of

astronomy to a navigator. And whereas the engine-driver, *as an engine-driver*, and the navigator, *as a navigator*, can afford to dispense with scientific knowledge except so far as it is embodied in routine and rule, the average man, *as a man*, cannot afford, without loss to his manhood, to dispense with the illuminating knowledge of reality which will enable him to transcend the life of routine and rule.

It was Buddha's mission to come to his rescue; to bring the saving knowledge which the Brahmin guarded but did not disseminate as knowledge, and which the ascetic could win for himself, but by ways which were too exclusively his own, into the inward life, *through the daily life*, of his fellow-men. He brought salvation within the reach of the many by telling them to enter the way of *Becoming*, the way of consciously directed soul-growth, the way of leading a life of self-control, unselfishness, sympathy and love. If that way were faithfully followed through the passing and, if necessary, through subsequent lives, it would lead at last to the deliverance of the wayfarer from the cycle of births and deaths, by breaking the ties of desire which attached his soul to earth, and made him return to it again and again. Then, in the fulness of time, he would "enter Nirvana"; in other words, he would rise to a higher plane of being, where his progress could no longer be followed in thought, or described, even symbolically, in words.

From this brief survey let us pass on to a fuller study of Buddha's work as a teacher and a reformer. One thing is clear at the outset. If we are to understand Buddha and form a right estimate of his place in the history of religion and of the meaning and value of his

self-imposed mission, we must approach him from the quarter of the Vedanta philosophy, in which he was cradled, so to speak; we must think of him as a practical exponent—an exponent in terms of character and conduct, of inward and outward life—of the spiritual idealism of the Upanishads. The ludicrous misinterpretations of his teaching which were once widely prevalent, and are still freely current, in the West are due to the attempt of minds which have been steeped in the Aristotelian tradition to bring his philosophy into line with the general tenor of their own,—an attempt which has resolved itself into the assumption that his logic was, like theirs, word-bound and dualistic, and that he shared their “realistic” outlook on the surrounding world. From this twofold assumption the way lies open to two profound misconceptions of Buddha’s teaching: that he denied the Ego (the soul, or self, or *Ātman*); and that he meant by Nirvana annihilation, or at least the prelude to annihilation.

It is true that those misconceptions are countenanced, in part at least, by Hinayana Buddhism, the official teaching of the South Buddhist Churches, at the present day; but that proves nothing except that the institutionalization of a religion is fatal to the understanding, by those who profess it, of its true inwardness, and fatal to the due development of its own inward and spiritual life. And that is a truth to which the history of every religion bears eloquent witness. Official Buddhism has not departed more widely from the spirit of Buddha’s teaching than has official Christianity from the spirit of the teaching of Christ. And it may safely be said that if official Buddhism had not departed

widely from the spirit of Buddha's teaching, its Churches, as organized communities, would not have survived to the present day. The price that has to be paid for the organization of a religious movement is the sterilization of spiritual ideas by their formulation as official creeds, and the substitution of the minimum for the ideal as the end of personal aspiration and endeavour.

What was the spirit of Buddha's teaching? We are all familiar with the Four Sacred Truths, the Eightfold Path, the Four Stages in the Eightfold Path, the Ten Fetters which have to be broken during the Four Stages, and the Five Commandments of the Moral Law. This presentation of Buddha's teaching is too formal and too elaborate to be accepted as authentic, in the fullest sense of that word. But that there is much in it which reflects the spirit of the Master, much which is true to the general trend of his teaching, can scarcely be doubted. This seems to be the considered opinion of Dr. Oldenberg, the well-known authority on Buddhism. His words are worth quoting:

"On the whole we shall be authorized to refer to Buddha himself the most essential trains of thought which we find recorded in the Sacred Texts, and in many cases it is probably not too much to believe that the very words in which the ascetic of the Sakya house couched his gospel of deliverance, have come down to us as they fell from his lips. We find that throughout the vast complex of ancient Buddhist literature which has been collected, certain mottoes and formulas, the expressions of Buddhist convictions upon some of the weightiest problems of religious thought are expressed over and over again in a standard form adopted once for all. Why may not these be words which have received their currency from the founder of Buddhism,

which had been spoken by him hundreds and thousands of times throughout his long life devoted to teaching?"<sup>1, 3</sup>

And Dr. Rhys Davids, the leading Pali scholar of his day, who did so much in the past century to awake an interest in Buddhism in this country, does not hesitate to say that

"much more reliance may reasonably be placed upon the doctrinal parts of the Buddhist Scriptures than upon correspondingly late records of other religions."<sup>2, 3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Buddha*, by Dr. Herman Oldenburg, translated by W. Hoey.

<sup>2</sup> *Buddhism*, by Dr. T. W. Rhys Davids (S.P.C.K. Manual).

<sup>3</sup> These passages were written many years ago. Since then fresh documentary evidence has come to light, and has been examined by Pali scholars, foremost among whom in this country is Mrs. Rhys Davids, Litt.D., the author of many works on Buddhism, the latest of which, *A Manual of Buddhism for Advanced Students*, has just been published. Mrs. Rhys Davids would not go as far as either Dr. Oldenburg or Dr. Rhys Davids in accepting as authentic the "orthodox" presentation of Buddha's teaching. She sees in it more than they do of the hand of the monkish interpreter and less of the spirit of the Master. She may well be right. The systematization of a religion is usually done by those who follow in the wake of the Founder—metaphysicians, theologians, moralists, priests, monks and the like—rather than by the Founder himself. Yet I cannot but think that behind the Four Sacred Truths, the Eightfold Path and the rest, there is present, obscured perhaps by being over-formulated but not eclipsed, the substance of the Master's teaching. And I still think, as I did when I wrote *The Creed of Buddha*, that it is possible to read into the quasi-official creed of early Buddhism an interpretation of Buddha's teaching which affiliates it to the spiritual idealism of the Upanishads, an interpretation which has always commended itself to me, and in which Mrs. Rhys Davids, who speaks with the high authority of a learned scholar and an original thinker, does in the main concur.



As a whole, then, the "orthodox" presentation of Buddha's teaching may be accepted as being at least true to the spirit of that teaching and to the general tenor of the Master's thought. And, as it happens, the main features of that teaching, as so presented, are entirely in keeping with the assumption that Buddha was, as I have suggested, a practical exponent—or shall I say, *the* practical exponent—of the spiritual idealism of the Upanishads, and that the central doctrines of that philosophy were articles, so to speak, of his belief.

Let us go back to those doctrines, and consider them one by one, and see what light they throw on Buddha's scheme of life. And let us begin with the two associated doctrines, the truth of which the Upanishads obviously take for granted,—the doctrines of Reincarnation and Karma. That Buddha believed in Reincarnation is a point on which I need not insist. The very purpose of his scheme of life was to bring salvation, in the form of deliverance from "the whirlpool of rebirth", within the reach of ordinary men. That he believed in Karma, the law of natural retribution which links earth-life to earth-life, is equally certain; for it was by the operation of that inexorable law,—in virtue of which a man is ever reaping what he has sown, and more especially, is ever reaping as character what he has sown as conduct,—that the way of life which he prescribed would, if faithfully followed, shorten the series of earth-lives which the disciple had to pass through on his way to the goal of Nirvana.

So far, then, Buddha was at one with the philosophy of the Upanishads, which indeed on that point, was itself at one with the dominant philosophy of Ancient India.

Let us pass on to the two-faced doctrine which is

implicit from first to last, in the philosophy of the Upanishads, but is not, except in one or two isolated passages, explicitly taught—the doctrine of Māyā. Here we come (as we have already seen) to what is, on the one hand, at the very heart of Indian philosophy, and, on the other hand, utterly alien to the general trend of Western thought. What the doctrine of Māyā affirms is that the air of *intrinsic* reality which the outward world and the individual soul or self wear, is *illusory*. What it does *not* affirm, but what the Western mind, blinded by its own dualistic logic, believes it to affirm, is that the outward world and the individual soul are *non-existent*. So entirely is the doctrine of Māyā at the heart of Indian philosophy that it may be said to be the negative presentation of what is quintessential in that philosophy, at any rate as set forth in the Upanishads. In other words, it clears the way for, and even opens the way to, the ascription of ultimate reality to the world in its unity and totality, and therefore to what is the fountain-head of its unity and totality,—the “unbeholden essence” of all things, the universal Soul or Self.

The Western mind, true to the Aristotelian tradition of belief in the infallibility of sense-perception, regards the outward world as the real world, and the individual soul—whether indissolubly linked to the body (as in Aristotle’s own psychology) or temporarily separable from it (as in Christian and Islamic theology)—as the real man. So far as it departs from that position it does so at the bidding of supernatural religion, which teaches it that the outward world is real because God has created it and endowed it with reality, and that in like manner the individual self—each self in turn—

is real because God has created it and endowed it with reality. But its response to this teaching, which transfers reality from earth to "heaven", is more nominal than real. For the believer, as for the materialist or the agnostic, the outward world is still, in effect, the real world, and the individual self is still the real man.

For the Indian thinker the outward world has its own kind and degree of reality, but it is not real in its own right. In like manner, the individual self has its own kind and degree of reality, but it is not real in its own right. The outward world is real, but only as an aspect of the All which is One. And the individual self is real, but only as an embryonic form of the Universal Self, as (a) "God though in the germ".

This is what the doctrine of Māyā must have meant to Buddha. That he took the relative unreality of the material world for granted is indisputable. It was because of its unreality, as evidenced by the impermanence of the things of earth and the suffering of various kinds which their impermanence causes, that he sought to break the ties of desire which bind men to it, and to release them from the necessity of returning to it.

But it was on the unreality of the individual self that he insisted most strongly. It was to the individual self that he preached the gospel of salvation—salvation to be achieved by the self making itself *real*, making actual its own potential reality. And the first step to be taken, if his preaching was to be effective, was to convince the individual self of its relative unreality, to convince it that it was far from being as real as it seemed to itself to be.

This task Buddha set himself at the outset of his mission. For his handling of it we must turn to the discourse which he is said to have held with five ascetics (or monks) shortly after he had expounded to them the Four Sacred Truths.<sup>1</sup>

"The Exalted One," so the tradition narrates, spake "to the five monks thus: The material form, O monks, is not the self. If material form were the self, O monks, this material form could not be subject to sickness, and a man should be able to say regarding his material form: My body shall be so and so; my body shall not be so and so. But inasmuch, O monks, as material form is not the self, therefore is material form subject to sickness, and a man cannot say as regards his material form: My body shall be so and so.

"The sensations, O monks, are not the self"—and

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<sup>1</sup> To give a detailed exposition of Buddha's teaching is beyond the purpose of this book. But as the discourse on the Four Sacred Truths preceded and led up to the discourse on selfhood, and as the conception of self which dominates the latter discourse, is the cardinal feature of Buddha's philosophy, it is perhaps well that I should set forth the Four Sacred Truths in a few simple words:—

- (1) Life on earth is full of suffering.
- (2) Suffering is generated by desire.
- (3) The extinction of desire involves the extinction of suffering.
- (4) The extinction of desire is the outcome of a righteous life.

Why and how does desire generate suffering? This is the question which Buddha answers in the later discourse. On account of the immense importance of that discourse I am quoting in full Dr. Oldenberg's version of it (in W. Hoey's translation).

then follow in detail regarding the sensations the very same exposition which has been given regarding the body. Then comes the same detailed explanation regarding the remaining three component elements, the perceptions, the conformations, the consciousness, which in combination with the material form and the sensations constitute man's sentient state of being. Then Buddha goes on to say:

"How think ye then, O monks, is material form permanent or impermanent?"

"Impermanent, Sire."

"But is that which is impermanent, sorrow or joy?"

"Sorrow, Sire."

"But if a man duly considers that which is impermanent, full of sorrow, subject to change, can he say: that is mine, that is I, that is myself?"

"Sire, he cannot."

Then follows the same exposition in similar terms regarding sensations, perceptions, conformations and consciousness: after which the discourse proceeds:

"Therefore, O monks, whatever in the way of material form, sensations, perceptions, etc., respectively, has ever been, will be, or is, either in our case, or in the outer world, or strong or weak, or high or low, or far or near, *it is not self*: this must he in truth perceive who possesses real knowledge. Whosoever regards things in this light, O monks, being a wise and noble hearer of the word, turns himself from sensation and perception, from conformation and consciousness. When he turns therefrom, he becomes free from desire; by the cessation of desire he obtains deliverance; in the delivered there arises a consciousness of his deliverance; rebirth is extinct, holiness is completed, duty is accomplished, there is no more a return to this world, he knows."

There is no denial of the self in this discourse. On the contrary there is insistence on its supernal reality. The real self is beyond all that we habitually identify with self; beyond outward form, beyond sensation, beyond perception, beyond conscious thought, beyond all the constituent elements of selfhood, And these must all be transcended, and the things that belong to them, or are associated with them, must cease to be desired, if the real self is to be won. It is the desire for what does not belong to "self"—the real self—that generates suffering; and the reason why such desire generates suffering is that what does not belong to the real self is impermanent, changeable, perishable, and that impermanence in the object of desire must needs cause disappointment, regret, disillusionment, and other forms of suffering to him who desires. But how is desire for what is unworthy of desire, for material and temporal goods and pleasures, to be extinguished, and the real self to be won? By leading a righteous life; a life of "Right Faith, Right Resolve, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Living, Right Effort, Right Thought, Right Self-Concentration"; a life in which conduct and character act and react on each other for good, in which unworthy desires die out through not being gratified, or as weeds die out when cultivated plants are making vigorous and healthy growth by their side; a life in which the real self is won at last "by a true transformation of one's being". This was Buddha's answer to the question; and it is an answer which the rank and file of mankind could at least begin to understand and begin to live up to—their understanding of it growing stronger and clearer as their life, their way of living, responded more and

more fully to its appeal. For their guidance in the path of self-realization Buddha drew up a short and simple Code of Moral Law, a code whose commandments were all prohibitions, and which inculcated—indirectly, but not the less effectively—kindness, honesty, continence, truthfulness and sobriety.

While this emancipative life, or series of lives, was being lived, ten fetters which bound the soul of the disciple to earth were to be successively broken. These were: (1) The delusion of self; (2) Doubt; (3) Belief in the efficacy of good works and ceremonies; (4) Sensuality or fleshly lust; (5) Ill-will; (6) The desire for life in the worlds of form; (7) The desire for life in the formless worlds; (8) Pride; (9) Self-righteousness; (10) Ignorance.

The place of ignorance at the end of this list is significant. As the Path begins with enlightenment, so it ends with it. It begins with potential enlightenment. It ends with actual enlightenment. It begins with partial enlightenment. It ends with perfect enlightenment. It is for the sake of knowledge—real, final, absolute knowledge—that the path has been followed. To know that the Universal Self is one's own real self,—to know this truth, not as a theory, not as a conclusion, not as a poetic idea, not as a sudden revelation, but as the central fact of one's own inmost life,—to know this truth (in the most intimate sense of the word *know*) by living it, by being it—is the final end of all spiritual effort. The expansion of the Self, which is the outcome of spiritual effort, carries with it the expansion of consciousness; and when consciousness has become all-embracing, the fetter of ignorance has been finally broken, and the "delusion of self" is dead.

In placing ignorance at the end of the list of fetters to be broken, Buddha's scheme of life falls into line with the teaching of the Upanishads, which makes salvation, in the sense of release from rebirth, dependent on knowledge of reality, on knowledge of the truth that Brahma and the Ātman are one. What of the other truths which are explicitly taught in the Upanishads—that the universe is a whole in virtue of the Formless Reality which is at the heart of it—the Ātman, or Soul, or Self—and that the Soul or Self of the universe is the real self of each of us? What was Buddha's attitude towards these? *He kept silence about them.* That he believed them, that they were his own innermost convictions, is a legitimate inference from the fact that they are needed to give coherence and completeness to his scheme of life. But he saw that if the truth of them was not self-evident the disciple must be convinced of it either by dialectical argument or by the illumination of his consciousness. And, apart from his own profound distrust of the metaphysical, or purely intellectualist, quest of truth, he knew that if it were widely indulged in, it would lead, as it has done in Christendom, to controversy, heated disputation, angry recrimination, condemnation and persecution of heresy, religious wars and the like; and would also distract men from, and lead them to undervalue, the plain business of trying to live wisely and well. And he therefore preferred that his disciples should *live* their way towards the knowledge of reality, than that it should be forced upon them by argumentative compulsion, backed up, if need were, by ecclesiastical authority.

But in thus choosing a path to knowledge which



*all* men might walk in—for the illumination of consciousness which he had in mind was to be the reward of a life (or succession of lives) of self-transcendence and soul-growth—he broke with the teaching of the Upanishads that knowledge of reality was to be won by Yoga, by ascetic self-discipline, systematically practised. At the very outset of his mission, he told his disciples that the Path which he prescribed was the "Middle Way" between the "life of pleasure", which is "base, ignoble, unspiritual, unworthy, unreal", and the "life of mortification", which is "gloomy, unworthy, unreal". The life according to Yoga is not necessarily a life of mortification; but it may easily pass into that undesirable extreme; and in any case it is a life for the few, not for the many. And it was to the many, to the plain average man, to man as such, that Buddha preached his gospel of deliverance and salvation.

Buddha broke with the Upanishads on that point, but on no other. And in breaking with them on that point, he filled a gap in their teaching which was obviously waiting to be filled. For he brought their sublime philosophy within the reach of the simplest and humblest of men. Dr. Oldenberg's contention that Buddha had no message for the poor and lowly is surely wide of the mark. The inward and spiritual life can be lived by the poorest of day-labourers not less than by the richest of millionaires. If anything, it is easier for the poor than for the rich to enter "the Kingdom of Heaven", for there are fewer earth-ties for the former to break. When Dr. Oldenberg quotes the saying that "to the wise belongeth the law, not to the foolish", and argues from it that "for children and

those who are like children the arms of Buddha are not opened", he is playing on the word "wise". The wisdom which Buddha magnified was not the wisdom of the intellectual, the learned, the cultured, but the wisdom of those who have taught themselves, by walking in the Path of Life, to distinguish between shadows and realities. The simplicity of Buddha's ethical code brings it within the reach of the simplest natures. It is surely open to those "who are like children" to be kind to their fellow men, to abstain from envy and covetousness, to control the lusts of the flesh, to be truthful in word and deed. If there are heights to be climbed beyond those which the "child-like" can dream of, the soul will not be asked to attempt these until, by the practice of the life of simple goodness, it has grown strong enough for the more arduous task. The greatness of Buddha as a teacher is proved by the fact that his scheme of life—so simple and yet so complex, so obviously and yet so profoundly true, so modest in its aims and yet so daringly ambitious, so moderate and yet so extravagant in the demands that it makes on our spiritual resources—provides for the needs of all men, in all stages of development, of all moulds of character, of all types of mind.

What, then, was the message which Buddha, with the Upanishads as his background, gave to the world? This in brief: that the way of living which makes a man a good father, a good son, a good husband, a good friend, a good neighbour, a good citizen, a good member of society, and in general a good man, ensures his salvation (in the truest and deepest sense of the word) by enabling him to outgrow his lower and lesser self, to find his higher and larger self, to transform

his whole being, to rise to higher and higher levels of reality, and to attain at last to oneness with the Ultimate Reality which men call God. In this scheme of life, which is entirely naturalistic, morality and religion, each at its highest level, meet and become one. The morality of Supernaturalism is essentially legalistic. It is defined and controlled by positive commands, enforced by promises of reward (culminating in the supreme reward of eternal happiness in heaven) and by threats of punishment (culminating in the supreme punishment of eternal torment in hell). Such a morality is obviously anti-idealistic. It appeals to motives which are selfish to begin with, and which—since it makes no provision for the self-transcendence of the soul—remain selfish to the end. In morality, as Buddha defined and prescribed it, the attainment of an inward and spiritual ideal is set before one as the supreme end of his aim and his endeavour; and as the end is beyond thought and even beyond desire, the way to it, involving as it does a progressive escape from self, and a progressive expansion and elevation of one's being, must be accepted as its own reward, a reward which for ever transcends itself and therefore for ever draws one on.

*PART III*  
WITHOUT OR WITHIN?



## WITHOUT OR WITHIN?

**W**ITHIN. Without. I must come to a final understanding with myself as to the meaning of these words. I mean by "within" the formless world which reveals itself to itself—that is, as my self to me—whenever I have the experience, unique in a sense and self-certifying, which I call self-consciousness or self-awareness. For my own part (as I have already confessed) I look for reality, in the fullest sense of the word, *within*, because I see that I cannot guarantee such reality to what is outside myself without, in doing so, guaranteeing a higher kind or degree of reality to myself, the guarantor.<sup>1</sup>

I mean by "without" the outward and visible world, the world of matter and form, "the universe around us". I mean this, to begin with. We all mean this much, at least. There are persons who mean much more than this. But there are persons who mean no more. Those who ascribe intrinsic reality to the world without fall, for the most part, into two classes. Some are content to regard the reality of the outward and visible world as ultimate as well as intrinsic. In other words, they regard that world as the whole world, as

<sup>1</sup> This is my formal reason. I have a reason which is stronger and lies deeper than this; but I cannot easily find words for it. I can but say that my self (as the object of my self-awareness) announces itself to my self (as the subject) as real in a sense which is all its own.

the world. Others, while thinking of it as real in itself, cannot bring themselves to think of it as real in its own right, cannot think of its reality as self-dependent. And so they look for the Real of all reals in another world. But as that world is *ex hypothesi* not within, it must be thought of as beyond the outside world, further away from the self-conscious self than the outside world is, separated from the self by the whole breadth of the familiar world. It must be thought of, in a word, as *Supernatural*; the outside world, with man as its master, being thought of as *Nature*.

Thus there are three principal attitudes of the human mind towards the problem of reality, which may be called, respectively, (1) Spiritual Idealism, (2) Normalism,<sup>1</sup> and (3) Supernaturalism. Each of these has implicit in it a more or less complete scheme of life. Let us consider these schemes and compare them with one another. And let us begin with that with which we are most familiar, that which has long dominated the moral, mental and social life of the West, though its influence is now visibly waning—the scheme of life which Supernaturalism prescribes.

The official teaching which was accepted throughout Christendom by all but a handful of free-thinkers in pre-Darwinian days, and which is still the "orthodox" creed of the Roman Catholic, the Greek, and the various Calvinistic Churches, is as follows: The world

<sup>1</sup> It is not easy to find the right word for externalism of the "naturalistic" type. "Materialism" is too narrow. "Naturalism" is either too question-begging or too wide. "Normalism"—see footnote to p. 97—comes nearest to expressing what I have in my mind,—with "Neo-Stoicism" as another name for it under certain of its aspects.

in which we live was created, i.e. called into being out of nothingness, by God, a Supernatural Being of infinite power and wisdom, at a definite date in the past and within a limited period of time. The account of the creation of Man, the Temptation, the Fall, and the Expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, as given in the second and third chapters of the Book of Genesis is "true history". The souls of men are all directly created by God. As the result of the Fall, each soul in turn enters the world under sentence of damnation, or, in Roman Catholic phraseology, as the "enemy of God". Jesus Christ, who lived as a man in Palestine nineteen hundred years ago, and who is also the Only Begotten Son of God, and the Second Person of the Christian Trinity, or Triune Godhead, by his death on the cross as atonement for the sin of Adam, has redeemed mankind, in the sense of bringing the possibility of salvation, or release from the curse under which he lies at birth, within the reach of every man. If men are to avail themselves of this offer of salvation they must receive a saving influence called "grace" from a supernatural source, either (as some believe) in the form of doles periodically distributed by the priesthood of divinely instituted Churches, or (as others believe) in an irresistible stream, as the result of faith in and acceptance of "the finished work of the Redeemer". Faith, whether in the divine institution and authority of the Churches and in the efficacy of their sacraments or grace-giving rites, or in the finished work of the Redeemer, in the efficacy for all time of his atoning death on the Cross, like the grace which it brings within our reach, is the free gift of the Supernatural God. The doctrine of Pre-



destination (to life or to death) is an essential feature of supernaturalism; but some of the Christian Churches give more prominence to this doctrine than others.

Man is expected to show his gratitude to God for His offer of salvation by leading a moral life, a life of obedience to God's will; but "works" without "faith",<sup>1</sup> however good they may be, will not ensure his salvation. On the other hand, an immoral life, if repented of at the end of it, may be atoned for, and the salvation of the sinner secured, either by the reception of saving grace through the Sacrament of Penance, or by faith in the efficacy of the self-sacrifice of Christ. The life on earth, be it short or long, is a man's only period of probation, his only period of spiritual activity and development. When it is over, he passes into a *state*, either of bliss in Heaven (whether directly entered into or preceded by a sojourn in Purgatory) or of misery in Hell. Each of these states will last for ever.

The "natural man", though he may go far in the investigation of natural phenomena, can have no knowledge of the deeper mysteries of existence, except so far as this is "revealed" to him; that is, imparted to him from a supernatural source. And in his conduct as a moral agent, he must, if he is to please God, receive and follow guidance from the same source. Broadly speaking, the path of obedience to the will of God, whether as expressed in formulated commandments or as made known by accredited agents, is the way to Heaven; and the path of disobedience, the way to Hell. The motives to which the Christian Churches make their chief appeal are the fear of punishment, whether temporal or eternal, and the hope of reward.

<sup>1</sup> For the theological definition of "faith", see p. 78.

One Christian Church, that of Rome, stands apart from the rest in claiming to be exclusively authorized by God to dispense saving grace to man, and in claiming to be infallible, in the person of its earthly Head, in matters of faith and morals.

This scheme of life is dualistic through and through. Instead of learning to measure gradation in the things that really matter, or in other words, to appraise spiritual values, *intuitively*, that is, by the exercise of conscience and reason and other inward senses, the believer is constantly called upon, especially in the greatest crises of life, to choose between alternatives; and his choice is, as a rule, dictated to him, the exercise of his private judgment being discouraged, if not actually forbidden. One result of this is that his intuition, being atrophied by disuse, ceases to function effectively; and he becomes more and more dependent, to the detriment of his own spiritual development, on guidance from without.

And when the alternatives which are presented to him are (in the last resort) salvation and perdition, each to endure for ever, it is but natural that he should seek to buy salvation at all costs, but also on the lowest possible terms. For if it is true, as he is taught, that just to miss salvation is to incur eternal death, it is equally true that just to escape perdition is to secure eternal life. And so there will be a constant tendency for the minimum to take the place of the ideal as the final end of aspiration and endeavour. And this will manifest itself as a secret demand on the part of the believer to be shown an easy way to Heaven—a demand to which the Churches, if they are to retain their hold on him, will find themselves compelled—in

some degree—to minister. This is a point on which I have already spoken (see pp. 99, 100). I need scarcely add that the different Christian Churches encroach on the freedom of the individual, with the result of mechanicalizing his life and lowering his standard of values, in widely different degrees.

There is another feature of this scheme of life, and of the cosmology which underlies it, which the recent advances of science and the consequent changes in our general outlook on the world, are bringing into strong relief. I refer to the littleness, in both dimensions—Space and Time—of the stage on which the drama of human life, as orthodox Christianity presents it, is being played. This little earth of ours, a mere speck of dust in the heavens, is its only theatre. It had a beginning in time. Eternity, in the sense of "from everlasting", is for God alone. Until quite recently we were content to believe that the world was created in the year 4004 B.C., i.e. less than six thousand years ago. And it will have a temporal end. During the first thousand years of the Christian Era the end of the world was believed to be imminent; and a "Last Day" which is not far distant is still looked forward to in many quarters. Christianity may be said to have been cradled in that belief; and it still bears the impress of it. In Supernaturalism God is everything; man is nothing. An atmosphere of self-abasement pervades the Sacred Scriptures as well as much of the devotional literature of Christianity in all ages. "What is man that Thou art mindful of him?" Man enters the world under sentence of damnation. His life on earth—his only period of probation, his only *life*, in the true sense of the word—may last for no more than a few minutes,

or it may last for as much as a hundred years. But a thousand years in the sight of God are but as yesterday. While man is on earth, he can do nothing good in his own strength; nothing without supernatural help and guidance. The best thing that can happen to him is to be "saved", to be snatched as a brand from the burning. And, as the object of his highest desire, eternal rest tends to take the place of eternal life.

To-day the more thoughtful minds in Christendom are turning away, in increasing numbers, from this scheme of life;—a scheme which was elaborated (as they remind us) in days of darkness and decadence, of mental and moral ebb; which they regard as irrational, unjust, immoral, unprogressive, embodying (as they contend) an unworthy presentation of the Divine, and an unworthy conception of the meaning and purpose of life, and unable, owing to its static character and its inherent limitations, to meet the demands of the expanding consciousness of mankind.

But the scheme has one redeeming feature, from which men will never turn away—the love and devotion which the personality of Christ inspires and which pervades like a subtle atmosphere the whole inner life of Christendom; expressing itself in various ways, not the least significant of which is the acceptance of him by men who are not consciously religious as their elder brother, their teacher, their leader, their pattern, their guide. The web of fantastic theology which has woven itself round the person of Christ—a compound of bad philosophy, bad psychology, bad history and bad science, translated into an elaborate ritual and enforced by ecclesiastical authority—is slowly, but

surely disintegrating. When it has finally broken up and passed away, the personality of Christ, as revealed in his character, his teaching and his life—of Christ the Man, who taught us that we are all Sons of God, and showed us how to become Divine—will shine out with unclouded splendour. We shall then feel grateful to the Churches of Christendom for having preserved that Lamp of guidance and truth, even while in doing so they have done much to obscure its light.

When thoughtful minds turn away from orthodox Christianity, what do they offer us in place of the scheme of life which it defines? A majority of them belong to what I have called the Normalist or Neo-Stoical school of thought, a school which reached its maximum of self-confidence and influence at the end of the last century, and still has many adherents, especially among the intellectuals of the day. In their revolt against Supernaturalism the members of this school rule out the Supernormal. They call themselves agnostics; but the impartiality of the agnostic is not theirs. I need not repeat the words in which Sir James Jeans set forth the leading features of their cosmology.<sup>1</sup> Suffice it to say that though they are familiar with the latest achievements of science, and though their minds roam freely through the limitless expanses of space and look backward and forward down the infinite vistas of time, they are content to believe that only on this petty planet of ours is life to be found, that into this "tiny corner of the universe"<sup>2</sup> life has

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 84, 85.

<sup>2</sup> They admit the possibility of there being other such "tiny corners"; but that is as far as they go in the way of peopling the universe with life.

"stumbled by accident", and that in the course of time it will be frozen out and cease to be.

Their attempts to find an adequate interpretation of the universe within the horizon of thought with which they are familiar, or, in other words, within the limits of the normal man's normality, are obviously foredoomed to failure. The assumption that the material world is an objective reality; that physical life is the only life; that mind is no more than "a set of events occurring in the body" and that its "psychoses" are all "neuroses";<sup>1</sup> that "consciousness" arises from inhibited reflexes and could not exist in the absence of the physiological machinery"; that the evidence for personal survival (which, if it could be substantiated, would wreck their whole system of thought) may be dismissed as worthless, without having been impartially examined; that the only immortality which a man can look forward to is that of living on in the consequences of his conduct while on earth;—these and the like of these are all baseless and question-begging assumptions; and the attempt to construct a complete cosmology on the foundation which they provide—a foundation which the more recent researches of science are beginning to under-

<sup>1</sup> *Space, Time and Deity*, by Professor Alexander, O.M.

<sup>2</sup> I am quoting from the report of an interview with Mr. H. G. Wells in the *Observer* of Dec. 28, 1930. Mr. Wells' exact words are "Consciousness as we know it". In using these words he wilfully narrows the horizon of man's experiences of consciousness. He rules out telepathy, clairvoyance, clairaudience, mystic vision, and all kindred experiences. He ought to have said "as the normal man knows it", or "as I choose to know it". He takes too much upon him when he uses the word "we".

mine—is, to say the least, profoundly unscientific. An agnosticism which is genuinely impartial and non-committal and which can maintain itself above the level of mere indifference, one can respect and even sympathize with; but an agnosticism which is elaborately dogmatic is a contradiction in terms.

And how do those whose minds find rest in this scheme of life propose to regulate, in ethical theory, their own lives and the lives of their fellow-men? Many of them look to physical science to "save" the world. The achievements of science in the past fifty years, in the way of expanding the horizon of our knowledge and enabling us to master the forces of the material world, have indeed been marvellous. But physical science, as such, is entirely a-moral; and its achievements can be used for good or for evil according to the ends that the user has in view. To-day, through its discoveries and the inventions which these have led up to, it has placed the resources of material nature at our service in generous profusion. But are we good enough, are we unselfish enough, are we far enough advanced in spiritual development, to be trusted with the knowledge of the deeper secrets of that world and with the use of its more occult forces? Are these not forces known to science, so terrible in their capacity for destruction and in the range of their destructive activity, that men speak of them, if at all, in an awed whisper,—forces, which, if let loose, would wipe out what we call civilization, and might end at last, if the use of them could be continued, by destroying the whole human race? Are our ideals high enough, are our passions sufficiently under control for us to be entrusted with the command of such forces?

This is a serious question which calls for serious consideration, and is not to be answered off-hand. And is our ever-growing dependence on machinery good for us, on balance, or the reverse? Are we to feel grateful to the brilliant inventors of labour-saving machines which supersede human skill and throw millions of men out of work? Science can change the face of the world, of our world, of the world of human life. It is doing so to-day, as we know to our satisfaction, and also to our cost. For though change succeeds change with bewildering rapidity it by no means follows that all the changes are for our good.

What science can do for us is, after all, of secondary importance to what we can do for ourselves. This takes me back to the all-important question which the "gospel of science" never faces: What is man's highest good? What is the end, the *τέλος*, the goal at which he ought to aim? The philosophy which looks for reality, in the ultimate sense of the word, outside the self cannot answer this question. Service to others—the answer which it most frequently gives—is, as we have already seen,<sup>1</sup> no answer; for if service to others is the highest end of human action, the ideal state of society will be the moral analogue of the economic state in which men live by taking in each other's washing.<sup>2</sup> The question will not be answered, will not

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 100, 101.

<sup>2</sup> In the familiar formula "each for all and all for each" a social state is presented to us which is perfect within its own limits, and the attainment of which is a worthy end of human action. But the attempt to determine what is the ideal end of man's being takes one beyond the limits of sociology, as that word is usually understood. What is "each" doing for "all"? What are "all" doing for "each"? These questions force them-



be asked in a form which admits of an answer, until the quest of the "Real of all reals" has been transferred from without to within. For service to others is, as we shall see, best and most effective when it is generated, necessarily generated, by service to one's own self.

We must now go back to the Upanishads and Buddha. The Upanishads teach us that the appearance of intrinsic reality which the outward world wears is illusory; that intrinsic reality belongs to the Knower, not to the known; that Brahma, the Real of all reals, and the Ātman, the Self of all selves, the Soul of all souls, are one; that God, to use the word with which we are most familiar, is the real self of man; that what the universe is in its inmost essence, that I—the *real* I—am.

To find the Real Self is manifestly the first and last duty of man. Not till he has accomplished that task can he be said to be "saved". And he will never accomplish it, in the final sense of that word. "He will enter the light" and pass into it more and more fully; but he "will never touch the Flame".<sup>1</sup> The ignoble conception of being saved by a minimum of personal effort, in the form of mechanical obedience to authoritative direction, finds no countenance in the philosophy of the Upanishads. Salvation, according to their teaching, is to be won by knowledge of the supreme truth that God is the real self of man. But how is that knowledge to be won? If it is to bring salvation, there must be in it an intensity of conviction

selves upon us, and give rise to other questions which open up limitless vistas to spiritual enterprise and speculative thought.

<sup>1</sup> *Light on the Path*, by M. C.

which will transform the whole of one's life. The Upanishads say much about knowledge, but too little about the winning of it. In some passages, and notably in the story of Naciketas and Death, the practice of Yoga, or ascetic self-discipline, is prescribed as the way to the desired good. But Yoga, as we have seen, is for the few, not for the many. Thus there was a gap in the teaching of the Upanishads which was waiting to be filled.

Buddha filled that gap. He said in effect: "If you would find the real self you must *become* it. You must follow the path of self-transformation through self-transcendence, through leading a life of self-control, unselfishness and love. Enter that path—a path which is open to all men—and it will itself become your guide." The more immediate end which he set before his disciples was that of deliverance from the cycle of births and deaths, through the extinction of the desires which bind the wayfaring soul to earth. When those ties were finally broken the soul would enter Nirvana and pass on to a higher plane of being, a plane (we may well believe) in which rest and spiritual refreshment would prepare the way for renewed activity, for a resumption under new conditions of the work of walking in the path of Becoming, of spiritual growth.

The stage on which, under this scheme, the drama of human life is being played is limitless in both the dimensions of the Cosmos—limitless in time, for the wayfaring soul passes through life after life; limitless in space, for in the course of its pilgrimage it may well visit world beyond world. At any rate we cannot take upon ourselves to assign limits to its movements in either dimension. And it may well be that in winning

Nirvana it will pass on to a plane of being which transcends both time and space. By comparison with the many worlds and the many ages through which the wayfarer travels in quest of his own reality, the one life and the one theatre of life of the Christian (whether believer or sceptic) and the Moslem look pathetically small.

This scheme of life finds support in the highest quarters of human thought and on the highest levels of man's spiritual activity. We have seen that the great mystics, one and all, have found reality in their own inmost selves, a formless reality which expands continuously while they contemplate it, and, while it remains imperceptible, unknowable, unimaginable, hiding itself from thought by its ceaseless self-transcendence, overwhelms them with a sense of greatness and glory, for which they can find no words, and yet challenges each of them—and each of us—to claim it as his own. "That is the real; that is the self; *that art thou.*"

Finally, and above all, the scheme of life which we owe to the Upanishads and Buddha coincides in all its essential features with the teaching of the greatest of all mystics, and (for us of the West) the greatest of all teachers—Our Lord, Jesus Christ. When Christ said "I and my Father are one" he spoke on behalf of all his human brethren, and he said in effect that only in oneness with God does man become what he really is. When he said "Be ye perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect", he indicated the goal to which the path of Becoming was to lead. And this is the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount from end to end. Man is to be "saved", not by exact obedience to for-

mulated commandments, but by trying to live up to an inward standard of spiritual perfection. Legalism said "Thou shalt not kill." "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Christ showed us that those commandments can be kept in the letter and yet broken in the spirit; that murder and adultery are sins of the heart, of the inner self. By the sin against the Holy Ghost he meant resistance to the call of the real self; and when he spoke of it as the sin for which there is no forgiveness, he meant that it is its own inevitable punishment, involving as it does the deliberate choice of the downward path. And what does the parable of the Last Judgement teach us, when the spirit of it has been rescued from the letter? Not that our choice in life lies between everlasting joy and everlasting fire, but that the way of salvation is the way of unselfish love. Jewish legalism, Greek intellectualism and Roman formalism have co-operated to exalt the letter of Christ's teaching at the expense of the spirit. But it is the spirit of it which alone can save Christianity from final failure; and the spirit of it finds its truest expression in the words "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you". But that is what the Upanishads are ever saying to us; and what Buddha has taught us to realize in our lives.

The debt that we owe to those great Teachers is incalculable. How shall we best begin to liquidate it? Not by searching their Scriptures for detailed directions for the conduct of life, but by trying to bring the spirit of their teaching into our own lives. The most formidable of all obstacles to our entering the path which leads to oneness with God, is the *sense of*

*separateness* which seems to cut us off from the world around us, from our fellow-men, from the world within us, from the real self. That sense is not to be reasoned away. If it is to lose its hold upon us, we must try to outgrow it, to live it down. How best to live it down is a problem which each of us must solve for himself. At the beginning of this book, when I set myself my task, I did not pretend to seek for an interpretation of the universe which would be absolutely valid, intrinsically true. My highest ambition was to find an interpretation which would be true for me, which would "present to my consciousness the true orientation of my being", which would tell me what I *really* believed. Neither in the "orthodox" nor in the "heretical" philosophy of the West did I find what I was seeking. But Ancient India, the India of the Upanishads and Buddha, if it did not give me what I wanted, at least showed me where to look for it. I asked for an interpretation of the universe which would be true for me. But what did I mean by "me"? Clearly, it must be the real me, if the interpretation was to have a real meaning and a lasting value.<sup>1</sup>

It was here that the sages of Ancient India helped

<sup>1</sup> But if it was to be true for the real me, would it not be absolutely true? One may well ask this question; and the answer to it is, I think, that absolute truth is a legitimate object of desire and pursuit, provided that the desire is a genuine desire, the outcome of a genuine need, and that the pursuit follows the lines of one's own being as one tries to transcend and transform self. The desire to possess absolute truth as formulated doctrine is a desire to possess what one has not won, and has its source, not in the love of truth for its own sake, but in the spiritual indolence which, while one recognizes an end as desirable, makes one shirk the labour of pursuit.

me. They set before me the finding of the real me as the supreme end of my philosophy and my life; and they taught me that the quest of the real me would involve a complete transformation of my being. They taught me that the sense of separateness, the sense of being self-centred and self-contained, was illusory, and that I must resist its claim upon me; and they gave me general directions for freeing myself from its control. Those directions I now propose to interpret for myself, and even to supplement; for I think that thus I shall best prove my loyalty to the spirit of my masters' teaching.

So strong is the sense of separateness that, as I have said, we cannot reason ourselves out of it, but must find other ways of escape from its despotic sway. One way which is open to all of us is that of realizing our oneness with the world around us in and through our perception of its *beauty*. The world around us is not the less beautiful because it owes its beauty, in part at least, to our recognition of and delight in its charm of form and colour and sound. We clothe it with beauty because, and so far as, we are able to respond, in varying ways and degrees, to the appeal that it makes to our more spiritual senses; but though the garment with which we clothe it is of our weaving, it is also and for that very reason—so near of kin are we to the world around us—in some intimate sense the world's very own. And who are most skilful in weaving the garment of beauty? Who are most sensitive to the aesthetic appeal of the outside world? Are they not those who have the "intuition of totality", who see things as wholes rather than as aggregates of parts, and who care more for general effects than for details

of form and colour? And are they not those to whom what they see and hear convey spiritual messages, suggestions of spiritual meaning, whispers of spiritual mystery; for whom the outward is symbolical of the inward, though the symbolism is as a rule unconsciously felt rather than consciously realized?

Let us consider some of the more impressive forms which the beauty of the outward world takes: a stormy sea breaking on a rockbound coast; a range of snow-clad mountains; the stars at midnight; a sunrise in summer; a resplendent sunset; an expanse of moonlight on a peaceful sea; the flowers and foliage of spring; the glories of the autumnal woods; a thunderstorm at night; the morning hymn of the birds;—each of these has a beauty of its own which it owes in part to the synoptic faculty which sees things as wholes, and to the imagination which passes on from what is seen to what is unseen; and each of these has a spiritual significance of its own which raises to a higher power its beauty of form and colour and sound. Thus the sea breaking on the cliffs has the infinitude of ocean behind it, and speaks to us of power and majesty in movement. The snow-clad mountains point upward to the sky, and speak to us of power and majesty in repose. The summer dawn, with its ineffable freshness and purity, and with the silent advance of colour and light along the eastern sky, speaks to us of “the pure eternal course of things”, and gives us an assurance that light will triumph over darkness, that life will ever renew itself, and that all will be well. It is the same with the other examples of visible or audible beauty. It will be found that in each of them there is a widening of one’s outlook beyond the

immediate horizon, and the whispering of a spiritual message.<sup>1</sup>

The mystery of beauty will always remain a mystery. And it is well that it should. We must try to live our way into the heart of it. We cannot hope to understand it. We must be content to know that it is the most spiritual and therefore the most real aspect of the outward world; that in it spirit speaks to spirit, and that the response which it awakes in the heart is *love*.

Another way of escape from self is through the quest of *Truth*. As Beauty mediates between vision and reality so does Truth mediate between knowledge and reality. Both as an idea and as an ideal, truth has a limitless range. It is *true* that there are twelve pence in a shilling and that four articles at ninepence each cost three shillings. And it is *true* that God is love and that charity covers a multitude of sins. The quest of truth which emancipates from bondage to self is the quest of ideal truth, of the truth that can never be won, in the sense of being presented to consciousness and measured and defined.

The desire to win ideal truth is latent in each of us.

<sup>1</sup> Sight and hearing are not the only senses to which the more occult aspects of the outward world reveal themselves. The "scents of the infinite sea" and some of the more familiar scents of flowers and leaves have a suggestiveness of their own, the range and subtlety of which invest them with spiritual significance. The power, the vastness, the freedom, the loneliness, the mysteriousness of the sea, and even the spirit of adventure in men which it awakes and ministers to, are all in the tang of its salt savour; and the scent of a flower can recall with a sudden vividness "old . . . far-off things", happy or "unhappy", as the case may be.



We want to understand the universe so that we may know how best to live. And, with this end in view, we try to bring the universe within the compass of the intellect. But this attempt involves an initial misunderstanding of the universe, which stultifies all the adventures—metaphysical or philosophical—to which it gives rise. We are surrounded by a world of Form; and it is in dealing with that world and the interrelations of its phenomena that intellect is most at home and does its most successful work. And so the demand of the intellect for ideal truth becomes a demand for a formal representation of reality. But Reality transcends all forms; and the formal representation of it is therefore a misrepresentation. Nor is anything to be gained by transferring the quest of ideal truth to a region of quasi-logical abstractions. For futile as is the philosophy which postulates the intrinsic reality of material things, still more futile is the philosophy which postulates the intrinsic validity of words.

We are led astray by the desire for finality, for a creed which can be formulated, for a theory of things which logically constrains assent. In the pursuit of this phantom light we flounder into morasses of baseless assumption, of circular reasoning, of dogmatic assertion, of barren controversy, of anger and strife. It is not in that direction that the truth which sets us free is to be sought. There is a more excellent way. The conception of Spirit, the ultimate reality, as transcending all form is the most emancipative of all philosophical conceptions. It gives a change of direction to the quest of ideal truth, which makes it as fruitful as the intellectual quest is barren. It tells us that if

we would know things as they are, if we would bring the appearance of things into harmony with their reality, we must transform ourselves; we must clarify our mental vision; we must widen our mental horizon; we must live into our own depths; we must live up to our own heights; *we must make ourselves more real*. For it is to self, *as a whole*, that Spirit, as formless reality, reveals itself; and the more real the self, the clearer will be its vision and the more adequate its conception of reality.

But it is hard for us to learn that lesson. We surround ourselves with fixed horizons of thought; and each of us is apt to imagine that his own horizon is the boundary line of existence. To transcend that horizon, to transcend it again and again, and to keep on transcending it, is the way of escape from imprisonment in self which the quest of ideal truth opens up to each of us. But the labour of climbing higher in order to command a wider horizon is one from which we instinctively shrink. The labour most, however, be faced and endured. We must climb higher and ever higher if we are to command the horizon that really bounds the universe. And though we shall never reach that mountain-summit, the climb, however arduous it may be, will always be its own reward.

We ask for peace of mind; and we think of it as untroubled repose in a state of complete mental satisfaction. But the only peace that is worth pursuing is "the peace which passeth all understanding", the peace of one who "looks on tempests and is never shaken", the peace of infinite unrest. For truth, in the ultimate sense of the word, is not a prize to be won and possessed. We are nearest to possessing it when we

are possessed by it; when it enfolds us and blinds us with the excess of its light.

We must make ourselves more real. This is the only way to solve the problem of Reality. And the surest way to make oneself more real is to lead an unselfish life, the surest way and the simplest—as simple as it is difficult—and the way which is open to all of us. This is what Spirit, the Real Self, is ever calling upon us to do. Universal in itself, it individualizes itself in a hierarchy of living beings, living its life in each of these, as well as in the All, which is its inmost self. At its highest level it is ultimately as well as intrinsically real; but its highest level is for us, who look along the vista of our own spiritual development, an unattainable ideal. Yet it is of the essence of Spirit to be ever seeking its own highest level. In the world around us this trend, this inward urge, manifests itself as the growth which is of the essence of life, and as that self-transcendence of growth which we call evolution. In each of us it is present as the will to growth, to becoming, to self-realization. To co-operate with that will, to make it our own, to live for it and in it and through it, is our highest good. To thwart that will, to resist it, to ask it to minister to the desires of the lower self, to try to imprison it in the channel of one's own individuality, is the beginning and end of evil.

It is in our dealings with our fellow-men that the opportunities for leading an unselfish life—the life of self-transcendence through sympathy and self-sacrifice—mostly arise. But the unselfish life is a path which, if faithfully followed, may lead at last to an inner life, which seems to be self-regarding, but is really the apotheosis of unselfishness—a life of self-transcendence

through self-contemplation, through facing what is formless and living with it and wresting from it its incommunicable secret. This is the life of the mystic (who meets us again and again); the life of the saint who is also a seer, of the seer who is also a saint. He has found the inward light and has not been blinded by it, but is perforce silent in its presence. His assurance of its intrinsic reality and its transcendent glory is only equalled by its helplessness when he tries to tell us what he has seen.

Yet there is one word which the mystic is allowed to utter—*Love*. What is quintessential in the Formless Essence which we call Spirit, what is quintessential in the life according to the Spirit, is Love. We can see, each for himself, that, even in its homeliest and most familiar form, love is the most real of all the realities within the range of our experience, the one thing that really matters, the final triumph of self-transcendence, the fulfilling of the Law—the law of man's higher life.

What is love? Who can answer this question? Complete self-loss is of the essence of love. So is complete reciprocity. This is one of the paradoxes in which our thought about love loses itself—and finds itself. And there are many more. Let us sum them all up in the supreme paradox: God is Love: God is Love—the Lover, the Beloved, and their mutual Love; Three in One, and One in Three.

God is Love. In other words, Love is the positive pole of reality, the inner essence of things in and through which All are One. This is the creed of the mystic, the one creed which all mystics have in common. What is the negative pole? To this question I can but answer with an audacious guess. The more successful

we are in analysing matter into its constituent elements, the more *immaterial* and the more *formless* do those elements become. That which lies, as yet undiscovered by Science, behind the "shadows" and "symbols" which the physicist's research has unveiled to us, is the antipole to the Ultimate Reality which we aspire to as the crown of our own spiritual development. And may it not be that the relation between pole and antipole is one of outflow and reflow? May it not be that the positive pole is ever generating the negative pole and ever drawing it back to itself? Physical Science, in its search for what is ultimate, seems to be moving in the direction of radiant light. May it not be that what *love* is to the inner reality of the universe *light* is to the outer reality; and that light is an eternal outflow from love and is ever returning, through aeons of evolution, to the source whence it came?

My guess has taken the form of a question which I cannot hope to answer, and which for that very reason I am free to ask. There remains the solution of the problem of Reality which each of us can—and must—work out for himself. Whether we know it or not, we are ever being challenged by the problem. And each of us must solve it in his own person and his own life. However far afield we may wander in the speculative quest of Reality, we must come back, baffled and bewildered, to ourselves at last. If we would learn to distinguish reality from illusion, or, with a finer discrimination, to distinguish between the different degrees of reality, we must try, by living to the spirit, to make ourselves more and ever more real. Each gain in the reality of one's own spirit is a gain in the power of

guessing the secrets and sounding the depths of the Real. He who has *lived* his way—the way of self-loss and self-transcendence—into the heart of Reality, is “the master of those who know”.

And he is more than a knower. He is a creator. In making himself more real he has been playing his part in the creation of the world—the task from which God has never rested and will never rest. In his being, in the growth of his soul, in the conduct of his life, Spirit, whose very essence is self-transcendence, has been fulfilling its destiny by transcending itself. And another name for the self-transcendence of Spirit is the creation of the world.



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